

Keeping teeth and gums healthy during pregnancy



Keeping teeth and gums healthy during pregnancy

- The best insurance for a healthy baby is a mother who is well, eats a healthy diet before and during pregnancy, and while breastfeeding.
- If you have poor dental health your baby is more likely to have dental problems.
- Your child's baby teeth start to develop around the sixth week of pregnancy. Calcium is particularly important in your diet while you are pregnant and breastfeeding. It helps to build the teeth and bones of the developing child. Calcium may be withdrawn from the mother's bones if there is not enough in her diet.

Your calcium needs and how to get enough

- Dairy foods are excellent sources of calcium. One cup of milk will provide 300mg of calcium. Reduced fat and calcium enriched products are recommended.
- While pregnant: 1100mg calcium per day
= **1 glass of milk + 1 tub of yoghurt + 1 cheese and salmon sandwich.**
- While breastfeeding: about 1200mg calcium per day
= **2 glasses of milk + 1 tub of yoghurt + 2 pieces of toast with baked beans (1 cup) and cheese.**
- Teenagers who are pregnant or breastfeeding need additional calcium for their own developing bodies.



Good sources of calcium

Milk, yoghurt, cheese, ricotta cheese, soy drink, salmon, almonds, broccoli and baked beans are all good sources of calcium.



Avoid salt, caffeine, carbonated drinks, nicotine and alcohol as these all decrease the calcium available to you.



The food cravings and nausea that some women experience while pregnant can often be relieved by eating small amounts of low fat and low sugar foods often. Sugary snacks eaten often can cause tooth decay.

Healthy food choices

Healthy food choices for pregnant women include vegetables, fruits, breads and cereals and low fat dairy foods eg. yoghurt.

Keeping teeth clean

The nausea and fatigue many pregnant women experience can mean toothbrushing is neglected. If plaque is allowed to build up, gum disease will result.

Gum disease may become worse during pregnancy but daily toothbrushing with a soft toothbrush and flossing will remove plaque and make the gums healthier.

Remember

- Calcium is essential during pregnancy for the proper development of baby's teeth and bones.
- Visit the dentist either before or soon after you become pregnant so any problems can be treated immediately. Be sure to tell your dentist you are pregnant.
- Avoid snacking on sugary foods.
- Brush with a soft toothbrush and a fluoride toothpaste daily and remember to floss.



**Queensland
Government**
Queensland Health

Queensland Health, reprinted 2008. Adapted from *Thumbsucking and Dummies*.
Health Department of Western Australia. February 1993.