

Dental Fact Sheet - Pregnancy

Pregnancy hormones can **increase a woman's risk for gingivitis**. Signs and symptoms include:

- Redness and swelling
- Tenderness in the gums
- Bleeding of the gums, even when teeth are brushed or flossed gently

If gingivitis is untreated, it can lead to periodontal disease. This is an infection in the gums and bones that support the teeth. Teeth may get loose, and may have to be removed. Smoking also increases the risk of gum disease.

Poor oral health has been linked to health risks for pregnant women. Evidence suggests that **gum disease raises the risk of premature birth**, low birth-weight and a condition called pre-eclampsia.

Dental care is safe during pregnancy, although some treatments may be delayed until after the baby is born, such as removing any amalgam fillings.

In **morning sickness** (nausea and vomiting), rinse the mouth with plain water or an alcohol-free fluoride mouthwash after being sick. This will help prevent the acid in the vomit from damaging the teeth. **Do not brush teeth straight away** as they will be softened by the acid. Wait about an hour before brushing.

Eating little and often can be a good way of managing sickness during pregnancy, however this can put teeth at risk of dental decay. Try to make sure that any sugary or acidic foods are kept to a maximum of three set meals and try to have **healthier alternatives** for any other snacks during the day. Using a **SLS-free toothpaste** such as Oranurse can help if tooth brushing is leading to feeling sick.

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/pregnancy-and-baby/teeth-and-gums-pregnant/>

NHS dental care is free for women when they are pregnant and until 1 year after their due date. If a course of treatment is started during this time, the whole course will still be free even if it doesn't finish until after the child's first birthday.

To get free dental care, **they will need to apply for a maternity exemption certificate (MatEx)**. The relevant FW8 form should be completed with a doctor, nurse or midwife.

As well as providing pregnant mothers with good advice and treatment for their own oral health, dentists can also encourage attitudes and behaviours that will help them protect the oral health of their children. **Mothers who have good habits themselves are more likely to pass these on to their children.**

For most patients, you should direct them to find an NHS dentist via:

<https://www.nhs.uk/Service-Search/Dentists/LocationSearch/3>

Women with significant additional needs may struggle to access care with a regular NHS dentist. These patients can be referred by a health or social care professional to the **Community Dental Services**. The referral form and acceptance criteria can be accessed here:

<https://communitydentalservices.co.uk/patient-information/referrals/derbyshire-referrals/>
