

# ORAL HEALTH CARE DURING PREGNANCY

## Why is good oral health important during pregnancy?

- Maintaining good overall health during pregnancy will help to protect the baby from many health problems.
- Poor oral health in mothers can cause pain and infections, which can lead to taking too many medications.
- Untreated dental disease may result in poor nutrition and reduce the mother's ability to supply the growing baby with the nutrients needed for proper growth and development.



## Hormonal Changes

- During pregnancy, a woman's body experiences hormonal changes. These changes can put pregnant women at an increased risk for developing oral diseases.
- During pregnancy, it is especially important to take good care of your teeth and gums.
  - ▶ Brushing teeth at least two times each day with a toothpaste that has fluoride.
  - ▶ Flossing at least once a day.

- Nausea and vomiting increase the amount of acid to which teeth are exposed. The acid wears away the surface of teeth.
- To help protect their teeth, pregnant women can do the following:
  - ▶ Rinse with a teaspoon of baking soda mixed with a cup of water.
  - ▶ Wait at least 30 minutes after vomiting before brushing.

- Pregnant women should ensure that they are drinking adequately fluoridated water.
- If fluoridated water is not available, pregnant women should discuss with a health professional about other ways that they can ensure they are receiving adequate amounts of fluoride.

- Pregnant women should receive a thorough dental examination during the first trimester to diagnose and prevent any oral diseases.
- The preferred time for any dental treatment needed is during the second trimester.
- If possible, some dental treatments may be postponed until after the baby is born.

**References**

Oral health during pregnancy and early childhood: Evidence-based guidelines for health professionals. Publication. Feb. 2010. CDA Foundation. July 2013 <Available at: [http://www.cdafoundation.org/library/docs/poh\\_policy\\_brief.pdf](http://www.cdafoundation.org/library/docs/poh_policy_brief.pdf)>.

Canadian Dental Association. CDA Position on Use of Fluoride in Caries Prevention. 2010; Available at: [http://www.cda-adc.ca/\\_files/position\\_statements/fluoride.pdf](http://www.cda-adc.ca/_files/position_statements/fluoride.pdf). Accessed 06/24, 2013.

**Additional Resources**

Parent Health Education Resource Working Group. Loving Care: Birth to 6 Months. [Halifax]: Nova Scotia Department of Health and Wellness, 2012.

Parent Health Education Resource Working Group. Loving Care: 6 to 12 Months. [Halifax]: Nova Scotia Department of Health and Wellness, 2012.

Parent Health Education Resource Working Group. Loving Care: 1 to 3 Years. [Halifax]: Nova Scotia Department of Health and Wellness, 2012.

Parent Health Education Resource Working Group. Loving Care: Parents and Families. [Halifax]: Nova Scotia Department of Health and Wellness, 2012.

For access to the Loving Care series, visit: <http://novascotia.ca/dhw/lovingcare/>