

Oral Health & Pregnancy:

A quick guide for
prenatal care providers

Supporting maternal and
infant health through integrated
prenatal and oral health care



Why Oral Health Matters During Pregnancy

Oral health is an important part of prenatal care, as periodontal disease and untreated infections have been linked to preterm births, low birth weight, and preeclampsia. In addition, untreated dental caries in the mother can increase the risk of early childhood caries through the transmission of cariogenic bacteria from mother to infant.



Hormonal changes during
pregnancy can increase risk of:

- Gingivitis and periodontal disease
- Dental caries
- Enamel erosion from nausea and vomiting
- Oral lesions

What you can do during prenatal visits

Perform an oral health assessment

Incorporate brief oral health screening questions to assess risk

- When was your last dental visit?
- Do you have a regular dentist or a dental home?
- Do you have bleeding gums, tooth pain, swelling, or trouble eating?
- Have you experienced frequent vomiting or acid reflux?
- Do you have concerns about receiving dental care during pregnancy?

Complete a visual screening

Perform an oral health screening. Observe for visible signs of:

- Red, swollen or bleeding gums
- Visible plaque or calculus
- Cavities or broken teeth
- Oral lesions or infection



Educate on the importance of oral health

Inform patients that routine dental care, including cleanings, x-rays, fillings, and other necessary treatments, is throughout pregnancy. Discuss the association between maternal oral health and pregnancy outcomes.

Encourage healthy oral habits by emphasizing

- Brush twice daily, floss daily
- Limit frequent sugary snacks and drinks
- Rinse with water after vomiting to reduce acid exposure to teeth
- Seek dental care promptly for pain, swelling, or infection

Refer patients to the dentist

Patients who don't have an established dental provider should be referred to the dentist for regular preventive care. Patients who have severe pain, abscess, or other signs of infection should be prioritized for an immediate referral.

Prenatal care providers should ensure that every pregnant patient is referred to a dentist for routine preventive care and treatment. Having a dental home supports that oral health is prenatal health.

For additional oral health information and provider tools, see our [Oral Health Resources](#). Providers may assist members in locating an in-network dentist by utilizing our [Provider Directory](#) or referring members to our Member Services Team at 1-888-477-9800.

