



John G Plummer & Associates Dental Surgeons

Dental care during pregnancy

Dental care during pregnancy is extremely important. From keeping up with daily oral hygiene, to monitoring changes in your young mouth it's vital to be in tune with your oral health.

Dental treatment is free on the NHS during pregnancy and up to your child's first birthday.

To get free dental care, you need to apply for a maternity exemption certificate. Ask your doctor, nurse or midwife for **form FW8**.

Your teeth: what to expect when you are expecting

During pregnancy, the change in hormone levels can leave your mouth more susceptible to bacteria and plaque, both of which create tender gums. This can put you at a greater risk of tooth decay and gum disease and cause issues such as:

- **Gum inflammation** – this is more likely to occur during the second trimester. Your gums may be swollen, tender, and may bleed a little during brushing and flossing. This is called **pregnancy gingivitis**.
- Plaque build up during pregnancy is common, but brushing and flossing regularly can help. Your body may not fight off plaque as easily when you're pregnant, which can lead to tooth decay and gingivitis. An antimicrobial mouthwash can help to help keep plaque away. *Ensure its alcohol free.*

- Pregnancy does not cause periodontal disease, but it can worsen this condition which can result from gingivitis.

- **Pregnancy epulis** (pictured below) is a localised enlargement of the gum, which can bleed easily. This may require additional professional cleaning. These growths are believed to be related to excess plaque. They usually disappear after the baby is born.



Some daily dental hygiene tips to keep in mind while you're pregnant:

- Brush your teeth at least twice a day with fluoride toothpaste containing at least 1450 PPM of fluoride.
- If your gums are swollen and tender due to pregnancy gingivitis try switching to an extra soft toothbrush and brush as gently as possible. Remember it's the brushing motions that clean teeth and not the pressure of the toothbrush!
- Floss gently once a day. Swollen and tender gums during pregnancy are normal, but see your dentist if you have concerns.



A healthy diet during pregnancy

Eating a healthy and balanced diet during pregnancy will help keep you and your baby strong.

Ensure to eat a variety of healthy foods, including fruits, vegetables, whole-grain products and dairy products like milk, cheese, cottage cheese and unsweetened yogurt.



- Ask your dentist about an antimicrobial mouth rinse to help combat the increase of plaque. Make sure you use at a different time to brushing as we want to make sure the fluoride in your toothpaste soaks into the teeth – using a mouthwash after brushing will just rinse it away!
- If you have morning sickness and vomiting, rinse your mouth with water after. This will help keep stomach acids from attacking your teeth and causing decay. Do not brush your teeth straight away after being sick as they will be softened by the acid from your stomach. Wait about an hour before brushing.
- If toothbrushing is a problem in the morning brush your teeth in the afternoon instead but always remember before bed is the most important time.
- **Stop smoking**, not only can it cause harm to you and your unborn child, from a dental point of view it will only make gum disease worse.

Limit high sugar foods like sweets and biscuits and avoid drinks that are high in sugar and acid like fruit juices and fizzy drinks.

Drink lots of water throughout the day.