



Your mouth is talking. *Are you listening?*

# Let's face it

Pregnancy can be tough on your body – including your teeth and gums. Problems in your mouth can affect **your health and your baby's**. So take special care during this special time. And please don't skip that dental visit. **YOUR MOUTH**

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## Oral Health During Pregnancy

Pregnancy brings a lot of changes to your body, and your mouth is no exception. These changes can affect your oral health, and poor oral health can affect your baby. The Missouri Dental Association (MDA) offers the following tips to help ensure that all you pass on from your mouth to your baby is a smile.

- **YOUR TEETH** Pregnant women tend to snack more, and, depending on the types of food (such as those high in sugar), this can lead to an increased risk for tooth decay. It is especially essential during this time to get enough calcium. While your baby will not take calcium from your teeth, you still need calcium for your body, plus extra calcium for your developing baby. Eat fresh fruits and vegetables, take prenatal vitamins, brush and floss twice a day and visit your dentist every six months. Dental care and treatment during pregnancy is safe for both you and baby.

- **GUM DISEASE** About half of all pregnant women develop pregnancy gingivitis or swelling of the gums. This tends to begin during the second month of pregnancy and peaks during the eighth month. While it usually tapers off once the baby is born, it's important not to ignore it because oral bacteria can impact the baby. Symptoms of gum disease include mouth sores, bleeding when brushing or flossing or gums that are bright red or red-purple in color, tender when touched or puffy or shiny in appearance. Talk to your dentist if you experience any of these symptoms.

*Research is not conclusive, but there have been studies linking poor oral health in pregnant women to premature birth and low birth weight.*

- **YOUR BABY'S TEETH** Be sure to get enough calcium and vitamins in your diet to help develop your baby's teeth. As soon as the baby arrives, start caring for his or her gums by wiping them with a clean, soft washcloth after each feeding. Keep it up when those adorable first teeth appear. Of course, formula and milk are good for baby, but they do contain sugar that can cause tooth decay if it sits on teeth for a long time. Cleaning with a washcloth or infant toothbrush removes sugary liquids and foods that can cause tooth decay and helps your baby get used to having the mouth cleaned and checked. Plan a dental visit around the baby's first birthday. Visit [YourMouthIsTalking.org](http://YourMouthIsTalking.org) for more information on oral health and early childhood.

### SOURCES

Columbia University College of Dental Medicine, American Academy of Periodontology, WebMD Medical Reference

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# Those white things?

They're not just **baby teeth**. They hold the place for your **grown-up teeth**. Take care of them now to prevent big problems later. You need dental checkups. You don't need sugary drinks. Pretty please!

YOUR MOUTH

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## Oral Health and Early Childhood

Whether or not your child is talking yet, there are a few things his or her mouth has to say. A common and dangerous mistake among parents is ignoring the importance of baby teeth just because they are not permanent. Baby teeth reserve space for developing grown-up teeth and help children speak and chew. Tooth decay and infection also can result in the child having difficulty eating, speaking, playing or learning. The Missouri Dental Association (MDA) urges parents to consider the following tips for helping children establish good dental habits from the start.

- **DAILY CARE** Good oral hygiene should begin at birth. Before teeth erupt, clean baby's gums with a damp washcloth. When teeth begin to appear, use a soft, age-appropriate toothbrush with water. Once the child is able to spit, use a pea-size amount of fluoridated toothpaste. Children need help brushing correctly until they can write in cursive.
- **FIRST DENTAL VISIT** The American Dental Association and the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry both recommend scheduling a child's first dental visit around the first birthday. Baby teeth are at risk for decay as soon as they are in the mouth. A dentist can answer any questions parents have and catch potential problems early.
- **DRINKS AND NUTRITION** Formula and milk are good for baby, right? Right. But they do contain sugar that can cause tooth decay if it sits on teeth for an extended period of time. Clean teeth and gums after bedtime feedings, and never leave a bottle or sip cup in the crib. Limit milk to meal times and only offer 4-6 ounces of juice per day after a baby is 1 year old; water should be offered between meals. When it comes to food, provide nutritious choices to build strong teeth from the inside.
- **MOM AND DAD'S ORAL HEALTH** Did you know tooth decay can be infectious? Parents with poor oral health can pass bacteria from their own saliva to their babies through some of the same kinds of activities that can pass on a cold, like sharing spoons or blowing on hot food. The most vulnerable time for infection is between 6 and 31 months. So an important part of taking care of baby's teeth is to take care of your own.

### Make brushing more fun:

- *Establish a tooth-brushing routine*
- *Have kids brush with a sibling, mom or their favorite person*
- *Use a sticker chart to record the day's brushing*
- *Make up a silly song for tooth-brushing time*
- *Have a special spot for your toothbrush and paste*

### SOURCES

*The American Dental Association and The American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry*

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# OMG! Ur teeth!

**Cavities and other dental problems** can be a real pain, not to mention cramping your social life. You take three minutes to check your phone every morning and night. How about three minutes to brush and floss. **PUHLEESE!** YOUR MOUTH

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## Oral Health for Kids and Teens

It's vital to your cell phone use, takes many shapes in pictures with friends and can sometimes get you into trouble. It's your MOUTH, and it has a lot to say. Maintaining a healthy smile means more than just a visit to your dentist twice a year. It means brushing and flossing twice a day and making smart choices for snacks and drinks. Read on for more on these and other tips from the Missouri Dental Association (MDA) to help keep your mouth jazzed.

- **DENTAL SEALANTS** For teeth at risk of cavities, ask your dentist about dental sealants. Sealants can reduce the likelihood of a tooth getting new decay by as much as 70 percent, making this a smart way to fight cavities. Sealants can save kids a preventable trip to the dental office and parents the cost of getting cavities filled.

- **TOOTH DECAY** Before grabbing a soda, sports drink or energy drink from the vending machine, consider milk or water. Excess consumption of drinks with lots of sugar and acid can lead to tooth decay and other health problems, including obesity. You don't have to deny your sweet tooth altogether – just be smart about the choices you're making.

*Dental cavities are the most common disease of kids age 5 to 17. That's right – disease – and it's preventable.*

- **DENTAL INJURY** You won't look so great in pics if your smile has a big hole in it. If a tooth is knocked out and not properly preserved or reimplanted, The National Youth Sports Safety Foundation, Inc. estimates it can cost \$10,000 to \$15,000 per tooth over your lifetime. Mouth guards, which cover the upper teeth, are an essential part of your sports equipment because they soften physical contact to the face, minimizing the risk of broken teeth and injuries to the tongue, lips and lining of the cheek. If you wear braces, mouth guards are especially important – a blow to your face could cut your cheeks and lips. Ouch!

- **ORAL PIERCINGS** Mouth jewelry makes a statement, but your mouth may have a few things to say about it too. Pain and swelling of the pierced area is common, as are injuries to the gums. Piercings may become infected easily and cause bad breath. Teeth can chip or crack from contact with the jewelry, especially in those who have a tendency to play with their piercing. If you have a pierced tongue, lip or cheek, rinse with an antibacterial, alcohol-free mouth rinse for 30 to 60 seconds after each meal and before you go to bed.

### SOURCES

*The American Dental Association and National Youth Sports Safety Foundation, Inc.*

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# Yeah, yeah

you know the drill. Brush. Floss. Checkups. But do you? Only half of Missourians see their dentist twice a year. HELLO! Gum disease may be linked to heart disease, among other problems. So call that dentist. And let's floss tonight. YOUR MOUTH

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## Oral Health for Adults

If your mouth could talk, it would have a lot to say. For example, it might remind you that your mouth is connected to your body and that preventable problems such as tooth decay and gum disease may be linked to other serious health issues. And, while they often go together, decay is not a sign of gum disease – someone can have gum disease and yet no cavities. The Missouri Dental Association (MDA) offers the following tips to help improve your relationship with your mouth.

- **GUM DISEASE** Recent studies indicate there may be a link between gum disease and heart disease. For example, some research suggests that bacteria from the mouth can enter the bloodstream and increase the risk for heart disease. Mild forms of gum disease affect about 75 percent of adults. Common signs are red and irritated gums or gums that bleed easily. Visit your dentist twice a year for maintenance, and brush and floss twice a day to avoid plaque buildup.

- **TOOTH DECAY** Tooth decay goes untreated in about one-third of all adults in the U.S., yet it can be easily prevented. Obvious decay usually appears as brown or black spots on the teeth, but white, chalky lines along the gum line also are an indicator. To help prevent decay, eat a balanced diet and limit sugary foods to mealtimes. Try not to sip on sugary beverages such as sweet tea, sports drinks and soda all day.

- **ORAL CANCER** More than 30,000 new cases of cancer in the oral cavity and surrounding area are diagnosed annually. Between 65 and 75 percent of those are detected during dental exams. To help prevent oral cancer, limit the use of tobacco and alcohol.

- **TEETH WHITENING** Because teeth whitening can affect your oral health, the MDA recommends consulting with your dentist before using any whitening product. Dentists can properly identify the cause of discoloration, which can result from a number of factors. This can save patients time and money and ensure a more predictable outcome without the possible adverse side effects sometimes associated with whitening, such as irritation or damage to the gums and teeth.

### TIME TO QUIT?

Smokers are more likely than nonsmokers to have the following oral health problems:

- *Plaque that hardens on your teeth and only can be removed during a professional cleaning*
- *Deep pockets between your teeth and gums that can hold bad bacteria*
- *Loss of the bone and tissue that support your teeth*

### SOURCES

*The American Dental Association, American Academy of Periodontology, Centers for Disease Control*

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# A lot goes unsaid

when you've been together as long as we have. But it's time to chat. Whether all these teeth are yours or not, older adults face unique oral health concerns – from **arthritis** to **drug side effects**. Please keep up the daily hygiene, and open up to your dentist.

YOUR MOUTH

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## Oral Health for Older Adults

You and your mouth have known each other a long time, but there are a few things it may be trying to tell you. Older adults can face unique oral health challenges. With a few tips from the Missouri Dental Association (MDA), you can maintain healthy teeth and gums and prevent problems that can lead to more serious health conditions.

- **OSTEOPOROSIS** Some drugs used to treat osteoporosis contain bisphosphonates, which have been linked to a condition called osteonecrosis of the jaw (ONJ). This rare but serious disease can cause severe destruction of the jawbones. Dental procedures that affect the bone can further increase the risk of developing ONJ. Talk to your dentist if you take a drug that contains bisphosphonates. For a list, visit [YourMouthIsTalking.org](http://YourMouthIsTalking.org).

*Simple tasks such as eating, swallowing and talking are difficult for a person with a toothache. What's more, a toothache could indicate a more serious problem. If you have a toothache, see your MDA dentist.*
- **DRY MOUTH** Older adults may experience dry mouth, which can be due to a medical condition or medication. Dry mouth can lead to tooth decay, bad breath and other oral health problems. If you have dry mouth, take extra care to brush and floss at least twice a day and see your dentist, who can determine if your dry mouth is due to medication or is a symptom of a more serious problem.
- **ARTHRITIS** There are many dental products available to help people with hand pain, such as pre-threaded flossers, flexible plastic picks with bristles and power toothbrushes. These toothbrushes are easy to operate and, if you have arthritis, they can help you clean teeth more effectively than a manual toothbrush.
- **ORAL FUNGUS** Older adults have an increased risk of developing oral fungus. Denture wearers may develop an inflammation of the tissue underlying a denture. This is usually caused by ill-fitting dentures, poor dental hygiene or the buildup of fungus. For some, small, red sores develop on the roof of the mouth making it difficult to talk or eat. Infection can be treated with antifungal medication and prevented with good oral hygiene.

### SOURCES

National Center for Health and Statistics, The Alliance for Aging Research, Mayo Clinic

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# Checking your blood sugar?

How about checking your gums. People with diabetes have a higher risk of tooth decay and gum disease.

Controlling your blood sugar helps. So does brushing and flossing. And please – see that dentist. **YOUR MOUTH**



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## Oral Health and Diabetes Management

Did you know dentists can be the first referrers of patients for diabetes testing and diagnosis? Your teeth are among the many reasons why it is important to control your blood sugar. Talk to a diabetes educator for guidance on diabetes management and follow these tips from the Missouri Dental Association (MDA).

- **PERIODONTAL (GUM) DISEASE** People with diabetes are at an increased risk of developing gum disease and often experience more severe forms of it than those without diabetes because they take longer to heal and have a lower resistance to disease. See your dentist or periodontist every three to six months if you experience symptoms such as red, swollen, tender or bleeding gums. Bad breath may be a helpful reminder to get checked for gum disease and to get into the habit of regular checkups. Controlling your blood sugar reduces your risk for developing gum disease.
- **TOOTH DECAY** Higher levels of glucose in saliva promote the growth of bacteria that cause plaque. Take extra care to brush and floss twice daily and see your dentist twice a year. Controlling your blood sugar reduces your risk of tooth decay.

*It is common for people who have diabetes to lose the ability to taste sweets, leading many to choose sweeter foods that can result in tooth decay.*
- **ORAL FUNGUS** Oral infections are more common among people with diabetes because of a lower resistance to disease. One type is a yeast-like fungus that creates rashes in the corners of the mouth. A second causes creamy, white blisters, usually on the tongue or inner cheeks. These problems can be made worse in people wearing dentures or partials. Infections can be treated with antifungal medication and prevented by good oral hygiene.
- **SCREENING** Oral infections and gum disease can be more severe and difficult to treat in people with diabetes. For this reason, a regular oral health screening is as important as a foot health screening and is a habit worth making.

### SOURCES

American Diabetes Association, Mayo Clinic

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