

Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield of New Jersey understands I want to get my baby's life off to a healthy start.



## Pregnancy and Dental Care

**Good oral health habits not only help prevent oral problems during pregnancy, they can also affect the health of your unborn child.**

What a woman eats during pregnancy may affect the development of her unborn child, including the unborn child's teeth. A baby's teeth begin to develop between the third and sixth month of pregnancy, so it's important that moms-to-be receive sufficient amounts of nutrients, especially calcium, protein, phosphorous and vitamins A, C and D. For example, if a pregnant woman is not providing enough calcium to her unborn child, her body will take this mineral from stores in her bones, including her teeth.

It's also important to realize that an increase in hormones exaggerates the way gum tissues react to irritants in plaque. However, it is the plaque, not the hormone level, that is the major cause of gum disease, making proper oral care all the more important for pregnant women.

### *Did you know?*

- The health of the expectant woman's gums may indicate an increased probability of a preterm birth.
- Pregnant women with chronic periodontal disease during the second trimester are up to seven times more likely to give birth prematurely.

Many women who previously had healthy teeth and gums may notice that their gums bleed and become swollen or inflamed during their pregnancy. This condition is sometimes called "pregnancy gingivitis," and typically peaks during the third trimester. It may appear as early as the first trimester and is the result of changing hormone levels, including increased amounts of progesterone.

Receiving professional dental care during pregnancy is important. Your dentist will know the appropriate precautions and may even recommend an additional cleaning during your second trimester or early third trimester.

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# Dental tips for pregnant women

- Prevention, diagnosis and treatment of dental conditions, including dental X-rays (with shielding of the abdomen and thyroid) and local anesthesia are safe during pregnancy.
- Don't delay dental treatment, such as root canals, fillings, scaling and root planing and extractions, during pregnancy. Delaying treatment may cause complications.
- Limit sugary foods and drinks, brush twice a day with fluoridated toothpaste, floss once daily, and see your dentist twice a year.

Be sure to visit your dentist regularly ...  
it can improve your overall health.

Sources: American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists  
March of Dimes  
The American Dental Association