

# Oral Health FACT SHEET

## EXPECTANT MUMS

Baby's teeth are starting to develop as teeth buds at 20 weeks in the womb.

### Brushing

**Advice:** Hormonal changes in pregnancy can make the gums more sensitive to plaque (dirt) left on teeth. The gums can be more inflamed looking red and swollen and may bleed on brushing so take extra care and time when brushing the teeth and gums. It should improve once the baby is born. Brush teeth twice a day for 2 minutes – last thing before bed and at least one other time in the day using a pea sized amount of fluoride tooth paste with at least 1350ppm (the amount of fluoride in the tube) and a soft toothbrush. An electric brush can be helpful but what is important is that teeth and gums are cleaned well. The use of disclosing tablets can be useful to show if any areas are not being cleaned effectively as they show up any plaque (dirt) after brushing. Daily cleaning in between teeth is very important to make sure that all plaque is removed and the dental team can help with what to use and how to use interdental cleaners.

After brushing spit out excess toothpaste and don't rinse out with water or mouthwash unless the dentist has recommended otherwise.



### Morning/pregnancy sickness

**Advice:** The use of small toothbrush can help if brushing the back teeth causes a problem with feeling sick. Don't brush teeth immediately after vomiting as this can cause damage to the teeth. Rinsing with water can help. Try and wait at least 30 minutes before brushing.

## Dental visits

**Advice:** Going to the dentist is free for expectant Mums and up until children reach 1 year of age. Mothers will need a maternity exemption certificate (MatEx) the form FW8 needs to be signed by your GP, Nurse or Midwife. Go as often as the dentist recommends as it is very important for preventative advice. Dental treatment and x-rays may be delayed until after the baby is born. Make sure that the dental team know that mothers are pregnant. If any piercings in the mouth are being considered talk to the dental team first to get some advice.



## Diet

**Advice:** Keep any sugary foods and drinks to mealtimes. Healthy snacks for teeth can include fresh fruit/veg, toast, cheese, pitta bread, plain yoghurt with fresh fruit added etc. Watch out for dried fruit as a snack as they contain concentrated sugar, keep these to meal times if eaten. Try and avoid cans of fizzy drinks, sports drinks, sweetened flavoured milk and fruit juice and fruit/sweetened teas as these contain sugar which can lead to tooth decay. Drinking plain water throughout the day is good for the body and teeth. Milk, tea and coffee without sugar can also be a safe drink for teeth. If sugary drinks and juices are drunk then dilute well and keep to mealtimes only. Sweet or fizzy drinks at bedtime causes tooth decay as saliva flow at night is reduced and so teeth are at more risk from acid attacks, water is best.

## Smoking

**Advice:** If you do smoke, giving up will be better not only for the baby but much better for teeth and gums. Quitting smoking will also reduce the risk of losing teeth at an early age and getting oral cancer.

## Good habits

**Advice:** Establishing good oral health habits now will make sure that when baby's teeth start to arrive it is just a normal part of the family routine.