



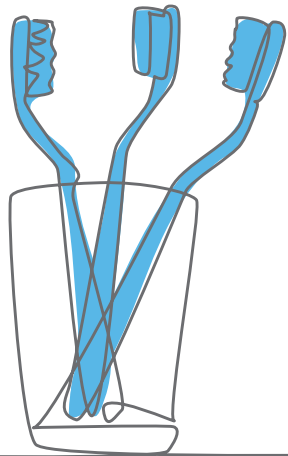
Supporting Oral Health During Pregnancy

A GUIDE FOR HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS



AmeriHealth *Caritas*

District of Columbia



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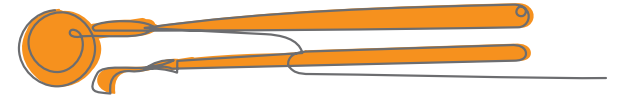
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Caring for one's oral health is always important, and this is no less true during pregnancy. Pregnant patients might be so overwhelmed with other health needs and concerns, however, that they may not be as attentive to their oral health.

This guide provides information about specific oral health considerations for pregnant patients, as well as how you can support them in caring for their dental health during pregnancy.

1

Assessing a Patient's Oral Health



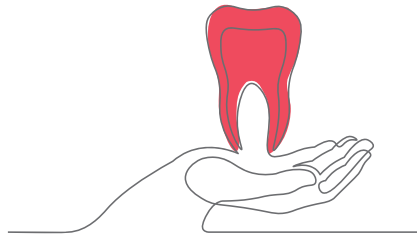
The first step when working with a patient who is pregnant is to take an oral health history. Here are some questions you might ask:¹

- 1.** Do you have swollen or bleeding gums, tooth pain, or other issues with your mouth?
- 2.** How do you handle any mouth pain (e.g., medications, drinking, etc.)?
- 3.** Have you experienced morning sickness? If so, what do you do afterward (e.g., rinsing mouth with baking soda and water, brushing teeth, nothing)?
- 4.** What do you usually drink (e.g., water, soda, coffee, etc.)?
- 5.** How do you satisfy cravings (e.g., fruits, vegetables, whole grains, cookies, chips, etc.)?
- 6.** Do you smoke or use tobacco products such as cigarettes, vaping devices, or chewing tobacco?
- 7.** When was your last dental appointment? Have you had any dental work in the past 12 months?
- 8.** Do you have any questions about oral health care during pregnancy?
- 9.** Do you have dental insurance?

¹ American Academy of Pediatrics. 2019. "Prenatal Oral Health Screening Guide."

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Common Oral Health Conditions During Pregnancy



Here are some common conditions you might see in pregnant patients, as well as recommendations for care:²

- **Pregnancy gingivitis**
 - **Symptoms:** Gums may appear inflamed or a patient may report swelling or bleeding gums during brushing and flossing
 - **Recommended care:** Brush twice per day and floss. Refer the patient for a professional dental cleaning and guidance on oral hygiene
- **Tooth decay**
 - **Symptoms:** White spots on a patient's teeth are an early sign of decay; these spots can become brown or black, with visible holes or pits in the teeth. Tooth sensitivity and pain are also indications of decay.
 - **Recommended care:** Refer the patient to a dental professional for treatment.

² American Academy of Pediatrics. 2019. "Prenatal Oral Health Screening Guide."

- **Tooth erosion**
 - **Symptoms:** Patients who vomit frequently may experience tooth erosion as a result of stomach acid, though the erosion may not be visible.
 - **Recommended care:** Patients can rinse their mouth with 1 teaspoon of baking soda and water, which can neutralize acid after vomiting. You can also recommend that patients avoid highly acidic food and drinks.
- **Pregnancy tumors**
 - **Symptoms:** These benign, red, and large lumps (usually near the upper gum line) can cause bleeding in the gums.
 - **Recommended care:** A patient should be referred to a dental professional for evaluation.

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Discussing Oral Health With Pregnant Patients



There are some key points you can make during conversations with patients to reinforce how important it is to care for oral health as part of caring for their overall health and their baby's health:³

- You do so much to keep your baby healthy, but **don't forget to see your dentist regularly** during your pregnancy to stay on top of your oral health.
- **Some conditions, such as gum disease or tooth decay, can be shared with your baby** if they aren't addressed, which is why it's important to get regular dental check-ups during your pregnancy.
- Let's talk about how **what you eat and drink** can affect your oral health. By drinking more water instead of sugar-sweetened beverages and choosing healthier food, you are taking small steps that can have a big impact on your health and your baby's health.
- If you take **a few minutes a day** to take care of your teeth, you can improve your oral health. Brushing twice a day for two minutes and flossing once a day will make a difference.
- By **taking care of your teeth during pregnancy**, you can give your baby the best start for a lifetime of good oral health.

³ American Academy of Pediatrics. 2019. "Prenatal Oral Health Conversation Guide."

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Helping Your Patient Access Care



If you realize patients need help accessing dental care, refer them to the following resources:

- **Scheduling a dental visit** – If your patient needs assistance scheduling a dental appointment or identifying or changing their primary dental provider (PDP), please instruct them to call **Enrollee Services at 1-800-408-7511**. Enrollee Services is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.
- **Join Bright Start®** – Bright Start is AmeriHealth Caritas DC’s program for expecting moms. A Bright Start Care Manager can help your patient find a prenatal provider, schedule appointments, and get the supplies needed to prepare for their baby’s arrival. Call **Bright Start at 1-877-759-6883** to enroll!
- **Transportation** – AmeriHealth provides enrollees with no-cost transportation to and from medical appointments, including dental visits. Patients may call at least two days in advance of their appointment. **Schedule a ride by calling 1-800-315-3485.**



If you have questions, please call the AmeriHealth Provider Services department at 202-408-2237.



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