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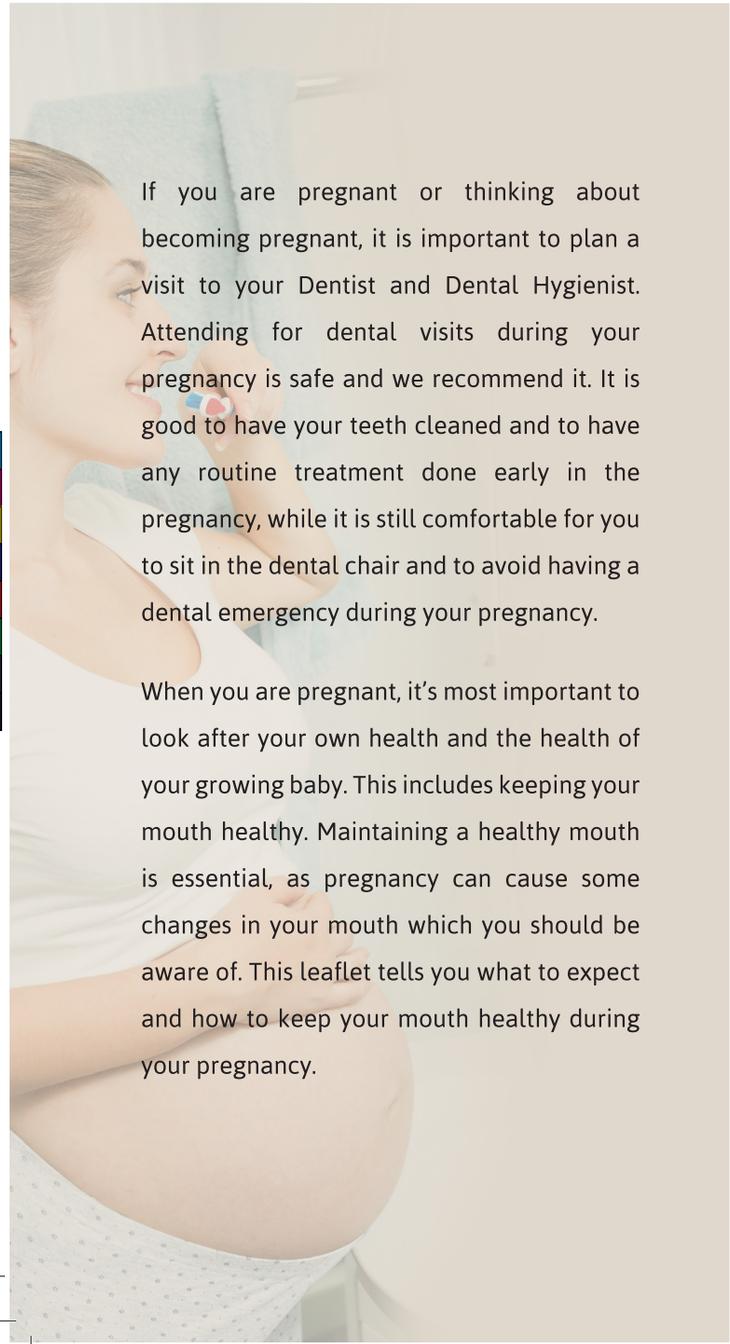

If you are pregnant or thinking about becoming pregnant, it is important to plan a visit to your Dentist and Dental Hygienist. Attending for dental visits during your pregnancy is safe and we recommend it. It is good to have your teeth cleaned and to have any routine treatment done early in the pregnancy, while it is still comfortable for you to sit in the dental chair and to avoid having a dental emergency during your pregnancy.

When you are pregnant, it's most important to look after your own health and the health of your growing baby. This includes keeping your mouth healthy. Maintaining a healthy mouth is essential, as pregnancy can cause some changes in your mouth which you should be aware of. This leaflet tells you what to expect and how to keep your mouth healthy during your pregnancy.

After your baby is born keep looking after your own teeth and gums. This not only keeps your mouth healthy but reduces the amount of bacteria you pass over to your baby.

Remember to

- Brush twice a day with a soft toothbrush and fluoride toothpaste.
- Floss or use aids to clean between your teeth once a day.
- Avoid sugary snacks between meals and no smoking.
- Your health is important for you and your baby. Make time for yourself and continue to attend your Dentist and Dental Hygienist regularly.
- Read up about how to look after your child's teeth and start brushing as soon as the first tooth appears.
- Your Dental Hygienist is happy to show you the best way to brush and floss your teeth.

If you would like to read more about keeping your mouth healthy during pregnancy, here are some useful links:

Irish Dental Hygienists Association, Oral Health Information
http://idha.ie/oral-health-information

Dublin Dental University Hospital, Oral health advice for patients
http://www.dentalhospital.ie/patients/oral-health-advice
http://www.dentalhospital.ie/wp-content/uploads/2010/10/Perio-dontal-Gum-Disease.pdf

US National Maternal and Child Oral Health Policy Center
http://www.mchoralhealth.org/PDFs/OralHealthPregnancyHandout.pdf

Mouth Healthy – The American Dental Association
http://www.mouthhealthy.org/en/pregnancy

Healthy Eating for pregnancy – Dept. of Health, Ireland
http://www.irishhealth.com/clin/documents/healthy_eating_for_pregnancy.pdf

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PREGNANCY
AND YOUR ORAL HEALTH

How to keep your teeth and gums healthy during your pregnancy

KIN

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Did you know pregnancy can affect your gums?

During your pregnancy, changing hormone levels can cause your gums to bleed, swell and become tender. This condition is called ***Pregnancy Gingivitis*** and it is the result of your gums becoming more sensitive to the bacteria in the plaque that forms on teeth every day. ***Pregnancy gingivitis can cause more serious gum problems if not treated.***

Another condition that pregnant women can sometimes have is called a ***Pregnancy Epulis.*** This is a tender swelling that forms in one local area between the teeth and gums. It is also caused by the bacteria in plaque and it can bleed very easily. The swelling will normally shrink and heal once your baby is born, but you should visit your dentist if it does not.

How can I avoid having gum problems during my pregnancy?

The key to avoiding gum problems during your pregnancy is prevention. ***You can prevent gum problems by keeping your teeth and gums really clean.*** At home, carefully brush your teeth twice a day using a small soft toothbrush and fluoride toothpaste. That should remove the plaque from your teeth and gums. To clean between your teeth, it is best to floss or use other appropriate aids. Your Dental Hygienist will be happy to show you the best way to do this and can also give you advice about mouthwashes. In addition, your Hygienist can help you to stop smoking if you are a smoker, as smoking also affects the health of your gums.

A regular visit to your Dental Hygienist for a routine professional cleaning will also help you to keep your gums healthy.

What about tooth decay and my diet?

To avoid tooth decay you should think seriously about what you eat during your pregnancy. At such important times in your life, your mouth can be more acidic and you may have cravings for sugar or other snacks or drinks. This can put you more at risk of tooth decay.

Morning sickness and reflux can also cause acid erosion of your teeth. This is when the acid from frequent vomiting causes the tooth to become worn and see-through.

The following steps will help you avoid tooth decay and limit tooth erosion.

- Limit the number of sugary snacks and drinks you have each day.
- Check your food and drink labels for the sugar content, some can have hidden sugars!.
- Safe snacks such as cheese and vegetables are a good alternative.
- Eat a balanced diet.
- Avoid brushing your teeth immediately after vomiting, as this can worsen the affect of the acid.
- Instead, rinse out with water or water with a teaspoon of baking soda or a fluoride mouthwash.
- Use sugar-free gum, as this will help you to produce more saliva or spit, which washes away the acid.