

Brush up—for your baby's health!

Good oral hygiene habits may be among the habits that can affect your baby's health. Pregnant women with gum (periodontal) disease are seven times more likely to give birth too soon to babies who are too small. In fact, premature births are the number one obstetric problem in the United States, according to the March of Dimes.

Scientific evidence indicates that premature and underweight babies are more likely to have long-term health problems than babies who are born at the right time. Many babies do not survive, and those who do may face a number of serious health problems. So practicing good oral hygiene habits now may protect your baby from health problems later.

How can gum disease affect my pregnancy?

Gum disease occurs when certain bacteria in the mouth infect the gums. Your gums may become tender, red, and even bleed. If left untreated, this infection may lead to tooth loss. Meanwhile, the bacteria in your mouth can travel through your bloodstream, potentially harming your unborn baby.

How can I protect my baby?

The best way to prevent gum disease is to practice good oral health habits:

- Brush your teeth after every meal
- Floss daily
- Visit your dentist for regular cleanings and examinations

Treating existing gum disease may also reduce the risk. While preventing and eliminating gum disease before pregnancy is best, research suggests that treating the problem after you learn you are pregnant can also be beneficial.

If you become pregnant and haven't seen a dentist in six months, make an appointment to see your dentist right away. Diagnosing and treating gum disease now may reduce health risks to your baby later. And your baby's health is worth it!

