



# Good Oral Care from Pregnancy and Beyond

Oral Care Guide for Mom, Baby, and Child



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# Introduction

According to the Center for Disease Control, tooth decay is the leading chronic disease among school age children. Severe pain and early tooth loss keep children out of school, affect diet, nutrition and self-esteem and can even become life threatening. With good oral care, dental disease is preventable. Good oral care begins from pregnancy and BrightWhites offers growing families oral care guidance for kids throughout childhood.



# Chapter One: Pregnancy

## Congratulations on your pregnancy!

The hormone changes associated with pregnancy can often bring about symptoms that affect oral care. Good oral hygiene and routine dental care during pregnancy can help you manage these symptoms.

### Morning Sickness

Acid reflux from morning sickness as well as heartburn can cause enamel erosion. Drinking fluoridated water after vomiting is recommended to provide tooth protection. Brushing right away can actually cause more harm, however lightly dabbing toothpaste on your teeth is suggested and waiting about an hour to use a baby soft bristled toothbrush is encouraged. As needed your dentist may recommend treatment for severe erosion or sensitivity. Cinnamon and mint flavored products may increase nausea so it is suggested to try the fruit flavored products that are often designed for children.

### Pregnancy Gingivitis

Bleeding or swollen gums are common in pregnancy due to hormonal changes and immunodeficiency. Although enlarged, loose, and red gums can appear throughout the mouth, the front teeth are typically most visible. Pregnancy can often make us forgetful or rushed when it comes to oral care. However, for your health as well as that of your baby, it is important to maintain an oral care hygiene regimen to include brushing, flossing and rinsing at least twice daily. Your dentist may recommend more frequent visits and other home therapies.

### Altered Taste

Changes in sense of taste as well as smell in pregnancy are common and thought to contribute to a balanced intake of nutrients for your baby's growth. Taste buds are generally positioned in a distinct pattern with sweet located at the front of the tongue, and moving backwards are salt, then sour and finally bitter taste buds. Stay hydrated with lemon infused water, listen to your body and be sure to discuss any major diet changes with your physician.



## Home Care

A good oral hygiene regimen to include brushing, flossing and rinsing two to three times a day is fundamental to your overall health and that of your baby. Soft bristled toothbrushes are often more gentle on your teeth and gums. Gels are potentially less abrasive than pastes and even brushing without either is better than not at all. It's encouraged to have routine dental cleanings before, throughout and after your pregnancy. Discuss home care challenges with your dentist and hygienist to design a regimen to meet your needs.

## The Mommy Check-Up

**Dental X-rays.** The American College of Radiology has deemed x-rays as safe during pregnancy. Be sure to alert your dentist of your pregnancy to discuss any concerns.

**Teeth Whitening.** Cosmetic procedures such as teeth bleaching are best to delay until after your baby is born. Gum sensitivity is one of the most common side effects.

**Routine Care.** Preventative and restorative dental care is important to decrease risk of infection and pain. It is recommended to have treatment during your second trimester.

**Do's and Don'ts.** Visit your dentist regularly and discuss all concerns regarding your oral care. Don't be afraid to inquire about how dental treatment may affect your pregnancy.



# Chapter Two: Baby

## A Healthy Start

Caring for a new baby is a huge task. Good oral care for babies is essential between feeding and sleeping. Establishing this rhythm early on can help maintain good oral health throughout childhood.

## Newborn Gum Care

Your baby's gums and newly erupting teeth should be wiped with a moist cloth after feedings and before naps. A baby wash cloth is an ideal choice but a baby soft toothbrush can also be used with a light round massaging technique. Be sure to clean your hands before and after cleanings. Don't forget to also wipe under the tongue and inside the cheek. Milk often collects in these areas.

## Co-sleeping and baby cavities

When nursing overnight, milk pools around your baby's gums and newly erupting teeth.

Because saliva decreases when we sleep, wiping the gums and toothbrushing is especially important before bedtime.

## Self-Soothing

A natural calming agent for babies, self-soothing has many benefits. However, after the age of two, the palate begins to expand laterally and along with the position of teeth can be adversely affected by thumb and finger sucking. In some cases, this can result in an open bite. Be sure to consult with your pediatrician and dentist about your child's growth and how to stop such habits.

## Teething

Although some children are actually born with teeth, your baby's first tooth should typically erupt around six months. Introduce a strong elastic, BPR free, medical grade silicone teether to help ease teething pain. See our **BrightWhites Tooth Eruption Timeline** to see when to expect your child's next tooth.



## First Dental Visit

With the eruption of the first tooth, babies should have routine dental visits every six months. A lap exam not only secures your child but allows adequate visibility for the dentist to examine the teeth and soft tissue attachments. While a cleaning may not be done before the age of two, this visit allows parents to discuss any oral care concerns.

### What to Expect at the First Dental Visit:

Just like all other baby activities, dental appointments should be routine. It's natural for parents to be a little nervous about their baby's first dental visit. There will be fears and likely a few tears, but this visit is a very important step as an initiation to good oral care. Try to avoid scheduling the appointment during nap or feeding times. The appointment will be short and sweet but it is an important time for parents to inquire about their child's newly erupting teeth and how to best care for them.

### Home Care

Your baby's oral hygiene routine begins with you. Wiping the gums and brushing your baby's new teeth is encouraged after meals and before naps, generally three times daily. Tap water is adequate but a fluoride **free** baby toothpaste is helpful in establishing a routine. Brushing for two minutes in a round buffing motion is desired. It is natural for babies to be uneasy during brushing but over time, they will grow accustomed. Discuss any concerns with your dentist.

[Watch our Baby Oral Care Video](#)

# Chapter Three: Toddler

## A-B-C, 1-2-3, brush and floss with me!

By their third birthdays, toddlers should have a full set of primary teeth. Proper oral hygiene is not only a collaborative activity with parent and child but fundamental for good oral health.

### Home Care

Toddlers are still developing their manual dexterity. To help them with their oral hygiene, parents should facilitate tooth brushing by positioning their heads for stabilization and visibility. A round buffing technique should be exercised for two minutes, at least three times daily. A youth toothbrush should have soft bristles on a small head and the handle should be long and equipped with a non-slip easy grip. After the age of two, a pea sized amount of fluoride toothpaste can be used and children must be taught to spit after brushing. Flossing should be coupled with brushing, which is especially important before bedtime because saliva levels drop when we sleep. Consult with your dentist as needed.

### F is for Fluoride: How much does your child need?

**What?** Fluoride is a naturally occurring chemical compound that helps prevent dental decay.

**Where?** It is found in drinking water, toothpaste and certain mouthrinses. It may be also be applied at your dental visit.

**When?** At the age of two, with adult supervision, kids should brush with a pea sized amount of fluoride toothpaste. Consult with your dentist about your child's cavity risk and particular fluoride need.

Fluoridated water is one of the greatest advancements in cavity prevention. Instead of bottled water, offer your children filtered or boiled tap water. Inquire with your local government officials about the fluoride content of your water supply and be sure to inform your dental provider if your family has lived in areas of varying fluoridation.



## Soothing Habits

Finger sucking, pacifier use and other self-soothing behavior are often carried into the toddler years. Depending on the intensity, duration and frequency of the habit, it may impact jaw growth and even the position of the later erupting adult teeth. Be sure to discuss concerns regarding self-soothing with your child's pediatrician and dentist.

## Emergency

Play time is for fun but sometimes children get injured. In the event of facial trauma, be sure to have your child evaluated by a healthcare professional. Baby teeth may become loose or even lost from injury so it is important to inform the dentist of such incidents. Childproofing your home can help minimize potential hazards and supervised play is always recommended.

## Special Needs

Children have a variety of needs. Pediatric Dentists are specialized in the treatment of children as well as adults with developmental challenges and other special needs. Be sure to consult with your child's healthcare providers to learn about the best options available for your family. Contact your insurance company and other social services in your area to secure the most convenient course for treatment to meet the needs of your child.

## Dental Visits

By their first birthday or the eruption of their first tooth, children should have a dental exam. Periodic exams are recommended every six months and cleanings are encouraged for children by age three. Depending on your child's cavity risk fluoride treatments may be provided. Inquire with your dentist about diet, nutrition and oral care guidance to help maintain good oral health for your child.

[Watch our Toddler Oral Care Video](#)



# Chapter Four: School Age

## Big Kid!

The start of school brings about more skill sets and independence. Make oral care a part of your child's healthy lifestyle.

## Children's Dentistry

Pediatric Dentistry is the specialty of dental medicine dedicated to the oral healthcare of children from infancy and throughout the teenage years. Additionally, pediatric dentists are qualified in the treatment of children and adults with special needs. Dental offices can be very intimidating for many children and parents are encouraged to consider the options available for their child. Pediatric dentists offer a variety of behavior management techniques to accommodate children and as needed provide care in a hospital setting. Positive dental experiences during the childhood years are fundamental to a lifetime of good oral health. Be sure to consult with your child's pediatrician and dentist to secure the best provider for your child's oral care.

## Healthy Habits: KIDS Oral Care 101

- Brush after breakfast
- Snack on fresh fruits and vegetables
- Hydrate on fluoridated water
- Low sugar beverages
- Brush after lunch and again after school
- Sugar free gum
- Brush before bedtime



## Braces

Between the ages of nine and twelve, your child will experience a great transition from primary teeth to the adult dentition and you may begin to notice spaces and or crowding in the arch. Although a certain degree of spacing is normal, your child may need to correct certain changes to obtain a more proper alignment of the teeth. Orthodontics is the field of dentistry that focuses on the irregularities of the teeth and their correction. Treatment can range from removable appliances to braces or even jaw surgery. While some children are treated in their teenage years, others may need treatment to begin earlier. Be sure to inquire with your child's dentist about any dental irregularities that your child may exhibit. Good oral hygiene is of great importance when wearing orthodontic appliances and professional cleanings may be recommended with greater frequency. Consult with your dental provider as needed.

## Athletic Mouthguards

Sports related injuries are all too common and in millions of cases each year result in tooth loss. The upper front tooth is the most commonly injured and twice as often in males as females. Studies have shown that among concussion in populations of high school students, more than half were reported to not have been wearing a mouthguard. The American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry recommends an athletic mouthguard for all children and youth participating in any organized sports activities. Mouthguards come in a variety of thickness types and designs ranging from over the counter stock options available at your local pharmacy to customized guards fabricated by dental laboratories. Be sure to discuss your child's athletic activities with your dental provider to minimize the risk of sports related facial trauma.

## Home Care

With the start of school, children are engaging in a detailed schedule of classes and other activities. Good oral hygiene habits should be implemented into this daily routine. As they become more independent, school age children should be informed about their choices in regards to diet and nutrition. Dental decay results from a dynamic process involving sugar found in the food we consume and the bacteria that live in our mouths. Cavity prevention involves brushing, flossing, and rinsing after meals to maintain a healthy environment inside the mouth. Additionally, routine dental visits every six months are recommended. Be sure to consult with your dental office about your child's particular cavity risk and preventive measures that may need to be implemented.



# Closing Thoughts

With fluoridated water and access to dental care, dental disease is not only treatable but preventable. BrightWhites provides tools to help establish and maintain good oral care from pregnancy and beyond. Follow BrightWhites and have fun learning about oral care. Visit [brightwhitesbydrwhite.com](http://brightwhitesbydrwhite.com) for more information on all of our educational products for your entire family including our [BrightWhites Fun Coloring and Activity Book](#), BrightWhites storybook [Making the Cut](#) and more. Be sure to consult with your healthcare providers regularly about your child's risk for dental decay.