Tips for a Healthy Mouth for Mom and Baby
Look for changes in your mouth during pregnancy

There are changes in the body that happen during pregnancy that can affect your mouth.

- You are more likely to get cavities because there is more acid in your mouth from morning sickness or acid reflux
- Your gums may be more sensitive, sore, red, puffy, and they may bleed easily
- Brushing may be more painful

Do you have any concerns about your teeth today?

Advise women to brush gently with a soft toothbrush.

It is safe and important to continue brushing and flossing during pregnancy.
It is also safe and important to go to dentist appointments during pregnancy.
Look for changes in your mouth during pregnancy
If you throw up, stomach acid can cause damage to teeth. Use these tips to keep your teeth strong and healthy:

• Wait 15-30 minutes after you throw up before brushing

• Brushing right away can wear away the strong outer layer of teeth called enamel

• To protect your teeth after throwing up, rinse your mouth with water or a baking soda and water mixture

• Use toothpaste and a mouth rinse with fluoride to make your teeth stronger and less sensitive

Morning sickness

If people have concerns or questions about fluoride, direct them to our website: www.fromthefirsttooth.org and click on the Resources for Community Organizations section.
Morning sickness
What you can do to take care of your teeth during pregnancy

• Brush gently and floss two times every day

• Eat low sugar snacks and avoid sugary drinks

• Drink fluoridated water to prevent tooth decay:
  ◦ Most town water is fluoridated; visit the FTFT website to see if your town is on the list
  ◦ Well water should be tested to check fluoride levels

• See a dentist during pregnancy

If people need help finding a dentist that offers services on a sliding fee scale, visit our website: www.fromthefirsttooth.org and look under the Resources for Community Organizations section.

Applications for fluoride testing kits can be found on our website. People may qualify for free water testing if they have a private well.
What you can do to take care of your teeth during pregnancy
How caring for your mouth in pregnancy affects your baby

- Baby’s teeth start growing in the 1st trimester of pregnancy
- Eating raw vegetables, fruits, low-sugar yogurts, and cheese helps your baby grow with necessary vitamins and nutrients
- It is important to take care of your teeth and gums during pregnancy
- If mom’s mouth is not healthy, there can be problems for her baby and pregnancy such as very high blood pressure, gestational diabetes, and low birth weight

Why do these foods support healthy development?

A baby’s teeth begin to develop between the 3rd and 6th months of pregnancy. The baby needs lots of nutrients during this time, especially vitamins A, C, and D, protein, calcium, and phosphorus (ADA).
How caring for your mouth in pregnancy affects your baby
It is safe and important to see a dentist while you are pregnant

- It is safe to see the dentist during pregnancy
- Dental cleanings, fillings, extractions, root canals, and x-rays are all safe to have during pregnancy
- Safe medications for infection or pain can also be recommended by the dentist

For more information, see the National Consensus Statement on Oral Health During Pregnancy. It can be found on our website on the Resources for Community Organization page, under the Evidence-Based Guidelines and Resources section.
It is safe and important to see a dentist while you are pregnant.
Flouride strengthens teeth, which is good for moms and babies!

Does your home have a well or town water? Does your family drink bottled water or tap water?

- Tap water is best because it usually has fluoride
- Water with fluoride strengthens teeth
- If you have a well, you can have your water tested to see if it has the recommended level of fluoride
- If your water does not have enough fluoride, you can ask your child’s doctor or dentist about fluoride supplements

People may qualify for free water testing if they meet all of the following terms:
- Have a private well;
- Receive a referral from their doctor; and
- Eligible for SNAP, WIC, TANF or MaineCare.

Applications for fluoride test kits can be found on our website, under the Resources for Community Organizations section.
Fluoride strengthens teeth, which is good for moms and babies!
Baby teeth matter

- Kids with cavities in their baby teeth are more likely to have cavities in their adult teeth
- Help your child develop healthy teeth by offering fruits and vegetables, and limiting sugary drinks and foods
- You and your child should drink fluoridated tap water to help strengthen teeth
- Ask your child’s doctor about a simple fluoride application

Examples of sugary drinks include:
- soda;
- juice;
- flavored milk; and
- sports drinks.

Encourage people to read the nutrition labels to look for sugars in processed foods like cereals, yogurts and granola bars.
Baby teeth matter
Brush your child’s teeth twice a day

• Before your baby has teeth, their gums should be wiped with a clean, damp washcloth at least once every day

• For children 1-2 yrs: brush teeth twice a day using a baby toothbrush and a smear of toothpaste, about the size of a grain of rice

• For children 3-6 yrs: brush teeth twice a day using a baby toothbrush and a pea sized amount of fluoridated toothpaste

• Parents should brush their child’s teeth until age 7 or 8, or until they can tie their own shoes

For more information, use our educational materials. They can be found at www.fromthefirsttooth.org under the Resources for Community Organizations section.

If you can’t find children’s toothpaste with fluoride, use adult toothpaste so your children are getting fluoride on their teeth. But, avoid versions that are for tartar control or whitening.
Brush your child’s teeth twice a day
Keep germs to yourself

- Cavity causing germs can spread from your mouth to your baby’s mouth
- If you have cavities, your child is more likely to have cavities
- Do not use your mouth to clean pacifiers or share spoons

To clean dropped pacifiers: wipe with a clean cloth or napkin, and rinse with water and soap if available.
Keep germs to yourself
What to look for in your child’s mouth

- Germs and food can stick to teeth next to the gums
- This can create plaque and weaken the tooth
- White spots in these areas can mean that cavities are starting to form
- Yellow, brown or black spots could mean that cavities have worsened or grown
- Cavities can grow very quickly in children and can be painful
- If your child has signs of cavities or pain in their mouth, see a dentist right away

If a parent has concerns about their child’s teeth, encourage them to see a dentist or hygienist.
What to look for in your child’s mouth

Healthy teeth

Teeth with cavities

White spots and early cavity

Teeth with severe cavities and painful abscess at the gum line

Photos credit: Joanna Douglass, BDS, DDS
Tell me about the kinds of foods your child eats in a normal day.

• Choose foods and drinks that are low in sugar.

• Limit sugary drinks such as soda, juice, flavored milk and sports drinks

• Choose foods that do not stick to teeth (avoid gummies and fruit snacks)

Check for extra sugar hiding in cereals, yogurt, fruit snacks and granola bars
Eat fruits and vegetables with your child
What does your child like to drink during the day?

- If your baby drinks from a bottle, put only breastmilk, formula or water in the bottle.
- Never let your baby fall asleep with a bottle.
- You can start a sippy cup around 6 months.
- Water is the best choice for a sippy cup.
- Switch from a bottle to an open top cup when your child is one year old.

Why is it important to teach kids to drink from a cup?

*Using bottles and sippy cups can cause issues with language and age-appropriate mouth development (American Speech Language Hearing Association).*
What cup does your child use?
Schedule a visit with the dentist for your child

Has your child been to the dentist?

- Bring your child to the dentist by age 1
- The first fluoride varnish can happen when the very first tooth comes in
- Children should have their teeth looked at and fluoride varnish applied at least twice a year at their dental or medical visits

If people need help finding a dentist that accepts MaineCare, visit our website www.fromthefirsttooth.org and look under the Resources for Community Organizations tab.

For parents/caregivers: recommend that they visit their dentist at least once per year too!
Schedule a visit with the dentist for your child
This book is intended to be used by educators, health and nutrition providers in community settings as an educational guide.

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For more information visit: www.fromthefirsttooth.org