



WISCONSIN DENTAL ASSOCIATION

6737 W. Washington St., Suite 2360, West Allis, WI 53214

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FOR INFORMATION CONTACT:

Davis Renzelmann

414-755-4110 or [drenzelmann@wda.org](mailto:drenzelmann@wda.org)

## BRUSHING FOR TWO: DENTAL HEALTH TIPS FOR EXPECTING MOTHERS

If you're expecting a newborn this month, you're one of many! According to data compiled from the National Center for Health Statistics and the Social Security Administration, September is the most common birthday month in the U.S. – and it's not even close. No matter when a mother's expecting, it's important to make healthy choices, especially when it comes to caring for her teeth and gums.

“There are so many ways in which a mother's health directly affects the baby's during and after pregnancy, and oral health is one of the most impactful,” says WDA President-Elect **Dr. Thomas Raimann** (Milwaukee). “Mothers with poor oral health are more prone to pregnancy complications and risk passing harmful bacteria on to their baby. With consistent and mindful oral hygiene, including regular dental check-ups during pregnancy, mothers can avoid these vulnerabilities and help give their babies the very best start.”

The WDA recommends these oral health practices for expecting mothers:

- **Brush and floss every day.** You've heard this plenty of times before, but there are *even more* reasons to practice these habits during pregnancy. Dentists recommend that pregnant patients brush twice daily with toothpaste that contains fluoride, and floss once daily, at the very least. Hormonal changes in the body while pregnant will affect the way gums react to plaque, which is why it is important to be thorough when cleaning your teeth. Nearly half of pregnant women will develop pregnancy gingivitis, a mild form of gum disease that most commonly develops between the second and eighth month. This can cause gums to become red, sore and even bleed. If left untreated, gingivitis will not only cause irritation and discomfort, but can also lead to more serious forms of gum disease, premature labor, low birth weight and more.
- **Don't miss an appointment.** If your last visit to the dentist was more than six months ago or you've noticed peculiar changes in your mouth, it's time to schedule an appointment. You should inform your dentist of your pregnancy, how far along you are and any changes to medication that have occurred. Unless a pregnant patient has a restricting medical condition or a high-risk pregnancy, routine checkups and cleanings from the dentist are harmless. Although treatment is safe at any point during pregnancy, it is recommended to schedule it during the second trimester. Treatment during the first trimester could be difficult due to nausea and a heightened gag reflex. During the third trimester, it may be uncomfortable to lay in a reclined dental chair with the positioning and weight of the baby. If you are not pregnant, but are trying, it is still a good idea to schedule an appointment. By taking care of this early on, it reduces the risk of having a dental emergency during pregnancy.
- **Eat a nutritious diet.** While it's completely normal for pregnant women to consume more, it is important to be conscious of what you eat and to avoid constant snacking. For a number reasons, pregnancy increases the risk for tooth decay, which is why sugary cravings should be resisted, as well. Development of the baby's teeth will occur between the third and sixth month, so it is essential that they receive the

*more*

vitamins, minerals and nutrients necessary to help teeth form correctly. Make sure to eat a well-balanced diet that includes fruits, vegetables, whole grains, low-fat dairy and lean proteins.

- **Defend teeth from morning sickness.** An unpleasant, but common side effect for the majority of women during pregnancy is morning sickness accompanied by vomiting. For those who experience this, it's important to be prepared to combat the harmful effects it can have on your teeth. Due to an increased, repeated exposure to acid, teeth become susceptible to enamel erosion, which eats away at the hard surface layer needed to protect against decay. Prevent enamel erosion by rinsing with a teaspoon of baking soda dissolved in one cup of water following bouts of vomiting. Then, wait roughly one hour to brush to allow tooth enamel to harden. If you have difficulty brushing due to heightened sensitivity to the smell of toothpaste, experiment with milder, more tolerable flavors.

Regardless of what point you're at in pregnancy, it's always a good idea to assess your oral health care needs. Now, more than ever, is the time to maintain habits that ensure a healthy future for your baby.

For more information on quality oral health habits for both adults and children, please visit [WDA.org](http://WDA.org).

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#### **About the Wisconsin Dental Association**

The Wisconsin Dental Association, with 3,100 member dentists and a number of dental hygienists, is the leading voice for dentistry in Wisconsin. WDA members are committed to promoting professional excellence and quality oral health care. Established in 1870, the WDA is headquartered in West Allis and has a legislative office in Madison. The WDA is affiliated with the American Dental Association - the largest and oldest national dental association in the world. For more information, call 414-276-4520, visit [WDA.org](http://WDA.org) and find us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Flickr](#), [Instagram](#) and [LinkedIn](#).