



## **Women's oral health**

Hormonal changes throughout a woman's life can increase her risk of tooth and gum disease. Puberty, menstruation, pregnancy, breastfeeding, and menopause all cause fluctuating hormone levels, which can lead to swelling and changes in the gums.

Bacteria are more likely to harbour around tender bleeding gums, so diligent oral care is very important at every stage of a woman's life.

### **Puberty and menstruation**

The surge of hormones during puberty and menstruation may cause swollen, tender gums for some women at different times of the month. Ulcers or cold sores are more likely to occur.

### **Pregnancy**

#### **Pregnancy gingivitis**

Many women find their gums bleed easily when they are pregnant. This is because gums are more sensitive to plaque. If pregnancy gingivitis occurs, a visit to the dentist is recommended. Attention to oral hygiene and professional cleaning will help reduce plaque and prevent gingivitis.

Losing a tooth after each baby is a myth!

#### **Damage from stomach acids**

Nausea and vomiting and the resulting acids in the mouth can damage the teeth by eroding enamel. Use a fluoride mouth rinse to neutralise acid and protect teeth.

#### **Food cravings**

Food cravings during pregnancy, which can result in eating sweet or sticky food, will increase the risk of dental decay. Nuts are a good alternative. They will reduce the cravings and not harm the teeth.

## Menopause

The onset of menopause and the decline in female hormone levels can result in new oral problems, such as pain in the mouth, burning sensations, dry mouth, or a bad taste. Gums may also become sore and sensitive.

These symptoms can be relieved by the continuation of good oral hygiene and regular visits to your dentist.

## Medications

The oral contraceptive pill and hormone replacement therapy can be responsible for red, bleeding, and swollen gums.

Women may experience dry mouth due to medications such as antidepressants, heart medicines, and fluid tablets. Some types of diet pills can decrease the production of saliva, which can lead to tooth decay and gum disease.

Your dentist can advise you on how best to manage your symptoms. If you are taking diet pills, drink extra water and use a fluoride mouth rinse daily.



## Important to know

- This page contains general information about women's oral health. It cannot replace individualised advice from your dental practitioner. Please consult your dentist for specific recommendations about your oral health and necessary treatments.

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