



# *What is* **Pregnancy?**

**Pregnancy is the period from conception—when a woman’s egg is fertilized—to birth. After the egg is fertilized by a sperm and then implanted in the lining of the uterus, it develops into the placenta and embryo, and later into a fetus. Pregnancy usually last 40 weeks, beginning from the first day of the woman’s last menstrual period. It is divided into three trimesters, each lasting three months.**

- > There are approximately 6 million pregnancies every year in the United States.
- > Every year there are approximately 2 million women in the US who experience pregnancy loss.
- > 600,000 women experience pregnancy loss through miscarriage.
- > 467,201 babies are born prematurely.
- > 307,030 babies are born with Low Birth Weight.
- > 820,000 women smoke cigarettes while pregnant.
- > 757,000 women drink alcohol while pregnant.
- > Nausea is one of the most universal pregnancy symptoms, affecting up to 85% of pregnant women.
- > 80% of pregnant women have acid reflux symptoms and the symptoms vary from mild to very severe.
- > Morning sickness is common during the first trimester.
- > Intense cravings for sweets are common during pregnancy.

## **How is pregnancy related to your mouth?**

There is a link between uncontrolled periodontal disease and pregnancy complications such as premature labor and preeclampsia (rise in blood pressure). A study exploring the possible link between periodontal disease and preeclampsia found that 50% of the placentas from women with preeclampsia were positive for one or more periodontal pathogens. Another study examined the amniotic fluid of a test group of pregnant women, identifying bacteria commonly found in the mouth and associated with periodontal disease.

Pregnancy causes hormonal changes that increase the risk of developing gum disease, which can affect the health of developing babies. Studies have shown that bacteria responsible for tooth decay are passed from the mother to the child in utero. The more frequently you give into the craving for sugary snacks, the greater the chance of developing tooth decay. Pregnant women with acid reflux are also at a greater risk of tooth erosion and periodontal problems, as the acid begins to thin and wear away the protective coating of teeth (enamel), leaving them weakened.

## **Resources**

<http://medical-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com>

<http://www.americanpregnancy.org>

<http://www.webmd.com/oral-health/dental-care-pregnancy>

<http://www.disabled-world.com>

<http://www.whattoexpect.com>

<http://dentalhealthandwellnessboston.com>

<http://www.perio.org/consumer>

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