

Benefits Spotlight

News for *You*. News to *Share* with your Employees.

Women's Oral Health: 4 Things You Need to Know

Menstrual cycles, menopause, pregnancy—women undergo significant hormonal changes over the course of their lives. You may not realize it, but many women's health issues have a direct impact on oral health as well. Understanding women's oral health needs will ensure that everyone, regardless of gender or stage of life, is getting the oral health care they need to maintain a healthy smile.

Here are four women's health experiences that can impact your teeth.

- 1. Pregnancy:** Pregnancy comes with major spikes and drops in hormone levels, which puts you at risk for certain oral health issues, including bleeding gums (hormone shifts make gums inflamed and irritated), periodontitis (gum disease) and loose teeth (tissues throughout the body loosen in preparation for childbirth). Women who experience severe nausea and vomiting during pregnancy may also erode their tooth enamel. Your dentist can give you strategies to minimize the effects of morning sickness on your teeth.
- 2. Hormonal birth control:** Birth control methods that use hormones to prevent pregnancy, such as the pill, may increase levels of estrogen and progesterone in your body. When these hormones spike, your gums can become inflamed and painful. If you need dental work performed, it's important you tell your dentist if you are taking hormonal birth control, as these medications may interfere with the healing process.
- 3. Menstrual cycle:** Throughout your monthly menstrual cycle, hormone levels raise and drop—these shifts make your gums sore, red and puffy. Ovulation and the few days prior to the start of your period often bring the most gum irritation, as this is when progesterone hormone levels spike. The best way to combat gum sensitivity during your menstrual cycle is to carefully brush and floss twice daily.
- 4. Menopause:** Estrogen levels take a steep decline during menopause, which can cause dry mouth and a host of related problems (such as cavities and sore gums). Menopause is also associated with osteoporosis, or bone weakness and loss. Bone loss can make gum disease develop more quickly, so keeping preventive dental appointments is especially important to detecting and treating it early.

Women experience many changes throughout their life, but the best way to preserve their oral health care throughout all phases is constant: Keep twice-yearly preventive dentist appointments and practice good at-home dental care. If your health status or prescription drug regimen changes, make sure you share that information with your dentist.

SOURCE: <https://www.womenshealth.gov/a-z-topics/oral-health>

How Vaping Harms Oral and Vision Health

As more people look to kick their smoking habits, e-cigarettes—or vaping—have emerged as a way to ease people off tobacco. Although e-cigarettes still contain nicotine, these products are marketed as a healthier alternative to traditional cigarettes. But are e-cigarettes healthy? Emerging evidence points to the contrary.

Most notably, e-cigarettes containing THC, the “high”-inducing ingredient in marijuana, have been linked to serious lung disease resulting in death. In 2019, the Centers for the Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) issued a statement recommending that people do not use vaping products containing THC.

Lung illness aren’t the only potential complications linked to e-cigarettes. The products pose risks to your oral and vision health, too.

What Are e-Cigarettes?

Also known as e-cigs, vape-pens, vapes or e-hookahs, e-cigarettes have a sleek, subtle design (like a pen or flash drive). The products heat a liquid containing nicotine, flavorings, chemicals and/or drugs (like marijuana) that users breathe into their lungs.

How Vaping May Harm Dental Health

Research has linked vaping to increased cavities and gum disease. One study that focused on vaping with flavored pods, which contain sugar-like sweet flavors that many teens and young users prefer, showed that the aerosol produced four times more bacteria adhesion to tooth enamel and a 27% decrease in enamel hardness. Increased bacteria on the teeth and soft enamel increase likelihood of tooth decay and gum disease.

Although many flavored pods were federally banned in early 2020 to curb use by teens, flavors are still available on the market that may produce these harmful effects.



Evidence has also directly linked vaping to gingivitis (gum inflammation) and periodontal disease (which may result in your teeth to loosen from the bone and fall out). Other oral health implications include dry mouth; throat, tongue and lip pain and irritation; and bad breath. Many of these problems are caused by dehydration, so drinking water will help reduce these side effects.

How Vaping May Harm Vision Health

Although several studies have directly linked vaping to oral health complications, no studies have yet connected e-cigarettes with vision problems. However, nicotine has been shown to cause several vision diseases, such as glaucoma, cataracts and age-related macular degeneration.

Because nicotine is used in e-cigarettes, it's important to tell your eye doctor that you use vaping products.

Safely Quit Nicotine Products

Vaping is a relatively new phenomenon, so more research is needed to truly understand its safety profile. However, vaping has been associated with several—and, in some cases, life-threatening—diseases.

If you've relied on e-cigarettes to help you quit smoking, do not go back to cigarettes. Talk to your doctor or dentist about safe and effective ways to quit nicotine products. Another smart step toward protecting your health is to keep regular vision and dental appointments, which go a long way in detecting potential health issues before they become major problems.

SOURCE: https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/basic_information/e-cigarettes/-severe-lung-disease.html