

# Valentine Dental Health Tips for Women

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Everyone has (or has had) teeth, right? Although that much is obvious, it may not have occurred to you that the 'fairer' sex has some unique dental health concerns. It is my Valentine's gift to all of the women readers to help raise their awareness of these conditions.

The Academy of General Dentistry (AGD) recently stated that women's oral health depends on their different stages of life. These are directly related to surges in sex hormone levels, such as puberty, menstruation, pregnancy, lactation and menopause. Women are also more likely to develop TMJ, myofascial pain, eating disorders and Sjogren's syndrome (which causes dry mouth).

We all need to adhere to good oral hygiene, but as a woman, brushing and flossing effectively every day will help you to avoid problems during stages of your life when hormone levels are changing.

**Puberty:** Girls may experience swollen gums, especially during menstruation. Mouth sores can also develop. They may have sensitive gums that react more to irritants.

**Oral Contraceptives:** These mimic pregnancy, therefore gingivitis may occur with long term use. Women who use birth control pills are twice as likely to develop dry socket (a complication of tooth extraction) and should consult with their dentist prior to any surgery.

**Pregnancy:** This surge in hormones increases inflammation of the gums (pregnancy gingivitis). If irritating plaque isn't removed, it can cause red, swollen, tender gums that are more likely to bleed. 'Pregnancy tumors', large non-cancerous growths can develop when swollen gums react strongly to irritants. Women with periodontal disease may be at risk for pre-term, low birth weight babies. If a woman experiences morning sickness, it is important to neutralize the acid caused by vomiting, which causes tooth erosion. (A paste of baking soda and water rubbed, not brushed, on the teeth for 30 seconds and then rinsed is ideal).

**Menopause:** Some women can experience dry mouth, a burning sensation and changes in taste. Gums can become sore and sensitive.

**Other Factors:** Diet pills and certain medications can decrease salivary flow, which puts patients at risk for cavities, gum disease and discomfort. Patients with eating disorders, such as bulimia (self-induced vomiting) show erosive effects on the backside of the upper front teeth. Smoking also creates a higher risk for periodontal disease.

Keep your dentist informed if you experience changes in your oral health or if you are approaching a different life stage. Visiting your dentist regularly will help with early diagnosis of any changes in your mouth, and thus your health. (Patients typically see their dentist more frequently than their physician).

To gain more insight into your oral health and how to be more effective taking care of it, call A Unique Dental Experience® for a complimentary consultation at (661) 254-4000 or visit [www.drdell.com](http://www.drdell.com).