

# PATIENT FACT SHEET: THE IMPACT OF HORMONES ON ORAL HEALTH



*Women have unique oral health concerns. Changing hormone levels during your menstrual cycle, pregnancy, and menopause can raise your risk of problems in your mouth, teeth, or gums. Health issues such as diabetes can also affect your oral health.*



## What is the link between hormones and women's oral health?

Women have an increased sensitivity to oral health problems because of the unique hormonal changes they experience. These hormonal changes not only affect the blood supply to the gum tissue, but also the body's response to the toxins (poisons) that result from plaque build-up. Because of these changes, women are more prone to the development of periodontal disease at certain stages of their lives, as well as to other oral health problems.

## Top tips to help prevent oral health issues for women throughout all stages of life:

- *Brush your teeth at least twice a day with a toothpaste containing fluoride. Floss at least once a day.*
- *Visit your dentist regularly for a professional oral examination and cleaning.*
- *Eat a well-balanced diet and drink plenty of water.*
- *Don't smoke-smoking increases your risk of gum disease and mouth and throat cancers. It can also stain your teeth and cause bad breath.*
- *If you have dry mouth, ask your dentist about treatments for this condition.*

The team at Dental Care Professionals are here to help, with two convenient locations in Adelaide CBD and Brighton, they can fit you in no matter how busy your schedule is, your oral health is essential for vitality.

### Resources:

[www.womenshealthweek.com.au/](http://www.womenshealthweek.com.au/)

<https://www.womenshealth.gov>

P: 8232 3280

W: [www.dentalcareprofessionals.com.au](http://www.dentalcareprofessionals.com.au)



# What are causes and symptoms of hormonal changes that may affect oral health in women?

There are five stages in a women's life during which changes in hormone levels make them more susceptible to oral health problems – puberty, the monthly menstruation cycle, when using oral contraceptives, during pregnancy, and at menopause.

## 1. Puberty

*The surge in production of the female hormones estrogen and progesterone that occurs during puberty can increase the blood flow to the gums and change the way gum tissue reacts to bacterial plaque. This causes the gum tissue to become red, tender, and swollen, and more likely to bleed during brushing and flossing.*

## 2. The monthly menstruation cycle:

*Due to the hormonal changes (particularly the increase in progesterone) that occur during the menstrual cycle, some women experience oral changes that can include bright red swollen gums, swollen salivary glands, development of canker sores, or bleeding gums. Menstruation gingivitis usually occurs a day or two before the start of the period and clears up shortly after the period has started.*

## 3. Oral contraceptives

*(birth control pills): Women who take certain oral contraceptives that contain progesterone might experience inflamed gum tissues due to the body's exaggerated reaction to the toxins produced from plaque. More recently released birth control pills, however, have lower concentrations of the hormones, which lessens the inflammatory response of the gums to dental plaque.*

## 4. Pregnancy

*Hormone levels change significantly during pregnancy. An increased level of progesterone in particular can increase your susceptibility to bacterial plaque causing gingivitis which is most likely to occur during the second to eighth month of pregnancy. This condition is called pregnancy gingivitis where the gums become swollen and bleed easily. Your dentist might recommend more frequent professional cleanings during your second or early third trimester to help reduce the chance of developing gingivitis.*

## 5. Menopause

*Numerous changes can occur with your oral health as you age. These oral changes can include altered taste, a burning sensation in the mouth, greater sensitivity to hot and cold foods and beverages and decreased salivary flow that can result in dry mouth.*

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