



Understanding Your Oral Health

(NAPS)—Though women may understand how different conditions or hormonal changes affect their bodies, many do not realize how numerous issues specific to women can also be detrimental to their oral health.

Here are surprising ways women's oral health can be affected by their unique health concerns, and how women can optimize their dental health:

Eating and exercising to maintain healthy bone density

Women can start losing bone density in their 20s, and need more of certain vitamins, including calcium and vitamin D, to ensure their bones and teeth are healthy. Eating foods rich in these essential vitamins, such as salmon, fortified cereals, and milk help keep bones strong and healthy.

Osteoporosis, a disease that causes bones to become weak and brittle, is more common in women than in men. In addition to eating a calcium- and vitamin D-rich diet, regular weight-bearing and resistance exercises can promote overall bone health and prevent osteoporosis.

Hormone levels and oral health

Hormone level fluctuations during menstrual cycles, pregnancy, and menopause can pose a threat to oral health. Estrogen and progesterone changes can result in oral health complications. These hormonal changes increase blood supply to the mouth, making women more susceptible to bleeding or swollen gums. Women may also notice swollen salivary glands during their menstrual cycle, as well as an increase in mouth ulcers (or canker sores).

During pregnancy, women are more prone to oral complications such as gingivitis, tooth decay, and cavities. Poor oral health also increases the risk of negative outcomes during childbirth. Some dental insurers, like Delta Dental of Wisconsin, offer extra care for expecting members during pregnancy to ensure the best outcomes for both mother and baby.

Hormonal changes during menopause can also cause significant changes, and even harm, to oral health. Gum



Good dental health for women means more than just a pretty smile.

disease and dry mouth are some of the most common oral complications among menopausal women. Delta Dental offers blogs and resources for customers specific to women in menopause to stay informed and empower them to make good oral health choices.

Endometriosis and gum disease

Endometriosis can also increase the risk of gum disease. Women who have been diagnosed with endometriosis have a higher likelihood of developing conditions such as gingivitis and periodontitis. Those with endometriosis should work with their dentists to help manage their care and develop a treatment plan. Visiting a dentist regularly for checkups is one of the best ways to ensure good oral health.

Preventing complications and ensuring a healthy smile

Though a number of women's health conditions can adversely affect oral health, good hygiene habits can help prevent periodontal disease and other complications from taking root. Brushing twice a day, flossing, and visiting the dentist at least twice per year is an important part of helping women stay healthy. For those who are pregnant, or have certain health conditions, making a plan to incorporate extra attention to dental hygiene should be part of a complete health regimen.

It is important for women to understand their bodies' unique needs to ensure that they are making choices to protect their oral health. Staying knowledgeable on how certain conditions affect oral health can help women keep a healthy smile for a lifetime.