

Your personal hygiene in pregnancy

An information guide

Your personal hygiene becomes even more important when you are pregnant, as this can lead to infections that can endanger both you and your unborn child.

Wash your hands

- Good hand washing prevents the spread of germs and viruses
- Wash your hands thoroughly with warm water and soap or anti bacterial hand wash for 20-30 seconds when you have been to the toilet and before eating or preparing food.

Prevent the spread of illness

- If you are unwell, contact your midwife before going to the clinic or surgery
- If you are admitted for a caesarean section and you or your close family are feverish or have a sore throat, tell the doctor or midwife
- Cover your mouth when coughing or sneezing; dispose of used tissues immediately after use
- Keep shared equipment clean with antibacterial wipes, e.g. keyboards, telephones and door handles
- Make sure cuts or abrasions are covered with a waterproof dressing.

Overall body hygiene

- A daily shower rather than a bath will prevent bacteria entering your vagina
- If you are having a caesarean section, do not shave or remove your pubic hair for a week before the operation. Shower on the day of admission, and keep the wound clean and dry until healed.

Vaginal hygiene

- Wear loose fitting cotton underwear that will allow proper airflow to your vaginal area
- Do not use tampons during pregnancy or the postnatal period
- If the normal white vaginal discharge becomes itchy, coloured or has an offensive odour, speak to your midwife or doctor.

Breast hygiene

- Early in pregnancy your breasts may begin leaking colostrum which can make your breasts damp and itchy. Wearing frequently changed breast pads in your bra can help
- Wash your breasts daily with mild body soap, but only wash your nipples and areolas with clear water to preserve the natural oils in your nipples.

Brush and floss teeth

- Poor dental hygiene can cause periodontal disease. This can be dangerous as bacteria may reach your unborn child and is known to cause complications such as amniotic fluid infection and premature birth
- Visit your dentist in early pregnancy. Brush and floss twice a day and limit sugary food and drink.