

Periodontal disease during pregnancy

If your dentist has diagnosed you with having periodontal disease, he or she has probably advised you to undergo teeth scaling and root planing. This is a procedure in which plaque and calculus are removed from the pockets around the tooth and the root surfaces are smoothed, allowing for reattachment of the gums to the tooth.

This effective procedure can help reduce your risk of experiencing premature birth and low birth weight. It can also help to reduce painful swelling and tenderness of your gums.

The power of prevention

There is a lot you can do to prevent dental problems during pregnancy. Start by keeping your teeth and gums healthy and happy. Practice good oral hygiene at home and visit your dentist regularly. Stop periodontal disease and other oral health problems in their tracks now!

Please note: Some services may not be covered under your benefit plan. Please refer to your benefit plan document for details concerning benefits, procedures and exclusions.

Sources

Academy of General Dentistry: www.agd.org

American Academy of Periodontology: www.perio.org

American Dental Association: www.ada.org

Journal of Periodontology Online: www.joponline.org/loi/jop

Texas Department of State Health Services, Oral Health Group: www.tdh.state.tx.us/dental/default.htm

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Pregnancy and Oral Health

How oral health can affect you
and your child



If you are pregnant, you know how important it is to take care of your health. But did you know that it is equally important to take care of your teeth and gums?

Good oral health is especially important during pregnancy because your hormone levels increase, which can cause substantial dental problems. Good oral health during pregnancy is also crucial because it can have a significant impact on your unborn child's overall health and dental well-being.

How does pregnancy affect your teeth and gums?

One of the most common dental problems women experience during pregnancy is pregnancy gingivitis (bleeding, swelling, redness and tenderness of the gums). When left untreated, pregnancy gingivitis can lead to a more serious stage of gum disease known as periodontal disease, which could cause premature birth and low birth weight.

What is periodontal disease and how can it cause premature birth and low birth weight?

Periodontal disease is an infection of the gums that can damage bone and tissue in and around the mouth, and can even lead to tooth loss. Tooth loss can make it difficult for you to chew and digest food, which can interfere with you and your unborn child obtaining the proper nutrition you both need. Additionally, extremely high levels of prostaglandin are detected in women who have severe cases of periodontal disease. Prostaglandin is a labor-inducing type of tissue hormone that is found in women with periodontal disease.

According to an article published in the *Journal of Periodontology*, undergoing a simple dental treatment like cleaning plaque and tartar from the gum tissue and smoothing out the teeth's roots to remove germs can reduce premature births by as much as 84 percent in pregnant women with periodontitis. Now, doesn't that statistic give you

enough incentive to be proactive and set up an appointment with your dentist today?

Telltale signs of periodontal disease

Periodontal disease during pregnancy can pose severe problems for both you and your baby. If you have one or more of the following symptoms, you may have periodontal disease and should seek dental attention immediately:

- Red, sore and swollen gums
- Bleeding gums
- Gums that have pulled away from your teeth (recession)
- Persistent bad breath or a bad taste in your mouth
- Milky white or yellow plaque deposits, which are heaviest between your teeth
- Pus between the teeth and gums followed by swelling and tenderness of the gums (abscess)

Statistic: Pregnant women who have gum disease may be seven times more likely to have a baby that is born prematurely.

— American Academy of Periodontology



Statistic: Premature births have become the number-one obstetric problem in the United States. A premature birth costs \$75,000 on average, versus a normal birth that costs around \$1,300 on average.

— Texas Department of State Health Services