

Pregnancy and Periodontal Disease

There used to be an old wives' tale that said "A tooth is lost for every child." While it may seem far-fetched, it may actually be based loosely on fact. Your teeth and gums can be affected by pregnancy, just like other areas of your body.

Most commonly, pregnant women can develop gingivitis, or pregnancy gingivitis, beginning in the second or third month and can increase in severity through the eighth month of pregnancy. During this time, some women notice swelling, bleeding, redness, or tenderness in the gum tissue.

In some cases, gums swollen by pregnancy gingivitis can react strongly to local irritants and form a large lump. These growths, called pregnancy tumors, are not cancerous and are generally painless. They usually disappear after pregnancy, but some may require removal by a dental professional, such as a periodontist. The best way to avoid periodontal conditions associated with pregnancy is to begin with healthy gums. If you are thinking about becoming pregnant, you should visit your dentist or periodontist for a comprehensive periodontal evaluation.

If you are pregnant, or planning to become pregnant, you need to know that your periodontal health may affect the pregnancy and ultimately the health of your baby.

The American Academy of Periodontology Patient Page is a public service of the AAP and should not be used as a substitute for the care and advice of your personal periodontist. There may be variations in treatment that your periodontist will recommend based on individual facts and circumstances. Visit perio.org to assess your risk and for more information on periodontal disease.

Pregnant women who experience periodontal disease during their pregnancies may be twice as likely to develop preeclampsia, which is characterized by high blood pressure and the presence of protein in the urine. It can put you and your baby at risk for severe complications.

Additionally, studies have suggested that women who experience periodontal disease during pregnancy may be at risk of having a premature or low birth weight baby. The good news is that researchers are making strides to find out exactly how periodontal disease affects pregnancy outcomes. Some studies have suggested that treating periodontitis during pregnancy may reduce the risks of a preterm birth. Preventing gum problems from developing during the stresses of pregnancy also appears to be important in improving the health of mother and baby.

If you are already pregnant and have been diagnosed with periodontal disease, treatment by your dental professional may reduce your chances of having a preterm, low birth weight baby. Talk to your dentist or periodontist for more information. If you're considering pregnancy, it's a good idea to include a periodontal evaluation as part of your prenatal care. A healthy mouth can help give you, and your baby, something to smile about!



Infertility Treatment

Researchers have found that women undergoing infertility treatment and who are subjected to ovulation induction for more than three menstrual cycles had higher levels of gingival inflammation and bleeding. More studies are needed to examine the impact of infertility treatments on periodontal health. Until more information is known, meticulous at-home oral care including routine tooth brushing and flossing and regular cleanings by a dental professional is a practical approach while receiving infertility treatment.