

As seen in

Question: I've read that dental hygiene is important during pregnancy. Is that true?

Response: Thanks for the question.

Everyone wants a healthy baby. Prematurity and low birth weight can get baby off to a rough start. As pediatricians, we are focused on the health and well-being of children. Getting children off to a good start is key to that mission. This installment shines a light on the importance of oral hygiene for pregnant women.

Hormonal changes during pregnancy can cause the gums to react differently to germs that cause gingivitis. Up to 75% of pregnant women will experience pregnancy-related gingivitis.

Prematurity and very low birth-weight can lead to a host of problems for newborns. Over the past 6 or eight years, there has been a growing body of evidence showing that mother's oral health impacts her risk for delivering a baby early or with very low birth weight. Gum disease and periodontal disease are associated with prematurity and low birth weight. This probably has something to do with the inflammation but nobody is absolutely certain. We also have some scientific evidence that improving oral health and hygiene reduces the likelihood of delivering baby prematurely or with very low birth weight by 68%.

These findings are significant since there are some simple interventions during pregnancy that can reduce the chance of delivering a premature or very low birth weight infant.

- Consider getting an evaluation by your dentist as part of your prenatal care.
- Follow the advice of your dentist and/or hygienist regarding flossing, brushing, and any special rinsing.
- Notify your dentist if you see signs of gum disease like swollen or bleeding gums.
- Tell your pregnant friends to seek attention as well.

Drs. Paul and Daphne Horowitz have opened Discovery Pediatrics, Inc, a unique pediatrics practice in Valencia. 661.259.8999 www.DiscoveryPeds.com

All Rights Reserved - © Discovery Pediatrics, Inc. (2008)