

Dental Advice For Mothers-To-Be

CHICAGO – May 6, 2003 – Increase your intake of folic acid ...Discontinue using birth control...And, visit your periodontist before becoming pregnant? Yes. Women contemplating motherhood may want to visit their periodontist or dental professional for a periodontal evaluation before becoming pregnant.



[Studies in the *Journal of Periodontology*](#) have shown a relationship between [periodontal disease](#) and [preterm, low birthweight babies](#). Women with periodontal disease may be seven times more likely to have a baby that is born too early and too small.

“Any infection, including periodontal infection, is cause for concern during pregnancy,” said [Gordon Douglass](#), D.D.S., president of the American Academy of Periodontology (AAP). “Pre-existing periodontal disease or periodontal disease that increases in severity during pregnancy can also increase a woman's chances of a preterm low birthweight baby. Because periodontal disease is often “silent,” many women don't know they have it, so a periodontal evaluation is definitely a good idea prior to becoming pregnant.”

Treating periodontal disease and/or removing [gingivitis](#) may also prevent other oral complications. “Beginning in the second or third month of pregnancy, expectant mothers often experience increased gingivitis also called pregnancy gingivitis that increases in severity throughout the eighth month,” said Douglass. “Significant progression of pregnancy gingivitis can lead to more severe periodontal infections.” The increase in estrogen and progesterone levels during this time causes the gums to react differently to the bacteria in plaque. This reaction causes swelling, bleeding, redness or tenderness in the gum tissue.

“The good news is women who treat their periodontal health prior to pregnancy decrease their chances of experiencing pregnancy gingivitis,” said Douglass. “Women should always take extra care of their oral health because their hormonal fluctuations can affect many tissues, including gum tissues.”

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is encouraging women to take care of themselves before, during and after they become pregnant. The AAP co-sponsored an event with the CDC this past April about public health implications of periodontal infections in adults.



If you're looking for last minute gift items for mother's-to-be, don't forget to add a toothbrush and dental floss to the gift basket or bouquet of flowers.

A [referral to a periodontist in your area](#) and [free brochure samples](#) including one titled *Women and Periodontal Disease* are available by calling 800-FLOSS-EM or visiting the AAP's Web site at www.perio.org.

The [American Academy of Periodontology](#) is an 8,000-member association of dental professionals specializing in the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of diseases affecting the gums and supporting structures of the teeth and in the placement and maintenance of dental implants. Periodontics is one of nine dental specialties recognized by the American Dental Association.