

# ORAL HEALTH CARE AND PREGNANCY

June 2014



Information compiled by Dr. David Scardella <sup>1</sup>

## What you need to know about your oral health during pregnancy:

- Recent data found that 56% of women did not visit the dentist during pregnancy.
- Many misconceptions exist about the safety of dental care during pregnancy, even amongst dentists and physicians. While **elective** procedures may be postponed until after pregnancy, it is important to maintain oral health during this time.
- Oral health disorders, such as periodontal disease, are associated with many disease processes throughout life, including cardiovascular disease, diabetes, Alzheimer disease, and respiratory infection.
- Research has shown association between periodontal infection during pregnancy and pre-term birth.

### Oral changes during pregnancy:

- Pregnancy gingivitis, benign oral gingival lesions, tooth mobility, tooth erosion, dental caries, and periodontitis.
- Approximately 40% of pregnant women have some form of periodontal disease. Some studies have shown an association between periodontal disease and pre-term birth.
- Treatment of periodontal disease during pregnancy is not associated with any adverse maternal or birth outcomes.

## Recommendations from the August 2013 “Committee Opinion” published by The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists:

- Prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of oral conditions, including dental X-rays with proper shielding and local anesthesia (with epinephrine) are **safe** during pregnancy.
- Conditions that require immediate treatment, such as extractions, root canals, and fillings (amalgam or composite) of untreated cavities, may be managed at any time during pregnancy. Delaying treatment may result in more complex problems.
- Use of fluoridated mouth rinses, prescription mouth rinse containing chlorhexidine, and xylitol-containing chewing gum have not been shown to have any adverse effects during pregnancy.
- For patients with vomiting secondary to morning sickness, hyperemesis gravidarum, or gastric reflux, the use of antacids or rinsing with a baking soda solution (i.e. 1 teaspoon of baking soda dissolved in 1 cup of water) may help neutralize the associated acid.
- Continue regular oral health maintenance, such as limiting sugary foods and drinks, brushing twice a day with fluoridated toothpaste, flossing once daily, and dental visits twice a year.

<sup>1</sup> Oral health care during pregnancy and throughout life. Committee Opinion No. 569. American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists. Obstet Gynecol 2013; 122:417-22.

For a copy of the full report, please see the front desk.