

Fact Sheet: The Oral Health of Pregnant Women

Pregnancy is an exciting time for a woman and her family. Given the seemingly endless information on healthy choices, it can be difficult to decide what is most important. Though often overlooked, oral health is essential for women during pregnancy and throughout their children's early years. Here's why.

- **Cavities result from an infectious bacterial disease (“caries”) that compromises health and can unintentionally be transmitted to children.** Approximately [four in 10](#) pregnant women have tooth decay or gum disease. Pregnant women with many cavities often have a [higher concentration](#) of bacteria, which can worsen other chronic conditions, such as diabetes or hypertension. Children may develop caries before teeth emerge.
- **Poor oral health has been linked to health risks for pregnant women.** Emerging science suggests that gum disease might raise the risk of [pre-term births](#), [low birth-weight](#) and a condition called [preeclampsia](#).
- **Dental care is safe during pregnancy, but the public is not sure.** A [national consensus statement](#) issued by experts in maternal, children's and dental health confirms the safety of dental care during pregnancy. However, a [2015 survey](#) shows that many adults remain unsure whether dental care is safe during pregnancy.
- **Medical and dental practitioners can take active roles in the oral health of women.** The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) recommends that pregnant women be “routinely be counseled” about the safety and importance of dental care, [noting](#) that women “often need reassurance” of the safety of dental services during pregnancy.
- **States could generate Medicaid savings by providing dental services to pregnant women.** More than [70% of women](#) with Medicaid coverage are of child-bearing age, but states are not required to offer Medicaid dental benefits to pregnant women. Medicaid dental services could [yield marked savings](#), and better oral health, for pregnant women and young children.
- **The oral health of future generations starts now.** [Nearly half](#) of U.S. births are paid for by Medicaid, creating an enormous opportunity for cavity prevention. Today, tooth decay is the #1 chronic condition for toddlers and teens.

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