

Oral Health

Oral health plays an important role in maternal and child health; animal and population-based studies have demonstrated an association between periodontal diseases and adverse pregnancy outcomes.(1, 2) Though further research is needed to determine the extent to which these associations are causal or coincidental, it is clear that oral health is an important component of providing comprehensive women's health care.

Early research has included observational studies that noted an association between preterm low birth weight deliveries and women with severe periodontal disease. The National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research, of the National Institutes of Health funded epidemiological studies that found a relationship, estimating that as much as 18% of all low birth weight births might be attributable to periodontal disease. Studies at several universities are currently exploring the impact of treating periodontal disease during pregnancy. Early findings suggest that treatment early in pregnancy may prove beneficial for improved outcomes. This *QuickInfo* will assist midwives in finding further resources on women's oral health.

Oral Health in America: A Report of the Surgeon General

Too little time is devoted to oral health and disease topics in the education of nondental health professionals. Yet all care providers can and should contribute to enhancing oral health. This can be accomplished in several ways, such as including an oral examination as part of a general medical examination, advising patients in matters of diet and tobacco cessation, and referring patients to oral health practitioners for care prior to medical or surgical treatments that can damage oral tissues, such as cancer chemotherapy or radiation to the head and neck. Health care providers should be ready, willing, and able to work in collaboration to provide optimal health care for their patients. Having informed health care professionals will ensure that the public using the health care system will benefit from interdisciplinary services and comprehensive care. To prepare providers for such a role will involve, among other factors, curriculum changes and multidisciplinary training. Surgeon General's Report on Oral Health, released May 25, 2000 is available at <http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/oralhealth/>.

Oral Health and Health in Women: A Two-Way Relationship

This fact sheet, published in 2004 by the National Maternal and Child Oral Health Resource Center, contains strategies for improving women's oral health, as well as journal articles and other resources. Copies may be downloaded from their site at www.mchoralhealth.org/PDFs/WomensFactSheet.pdf.

Copies are also available at no cost from HRSA Information Center, PO Box 2910, Merrifield, VA 22116; (888) Ask-HRSA, www.hrsa.gov.

NYUCD Infant Oral Health Manual for Health Professionals (2nd Ed, 2000)

This manual is published by the New York University College of Dentistry – Department of Pediatric Dentistry. It is available in a hard copy binder or CD ROM format. To order, call (212) 998-9657, or email Johanna.Rosman@nyu.edu.

Crall JJ. 1999. *Opportunities for improving maternal and infant oral health through prenatal care*. In McCormick MC, Siegel JE, eds. *Prenatal care: Effectiveness and Implementation*. Cambridge AM: Cambridge University Press. Contact: Phone 800-872-7423 or 914-937-9600; FAX: 914-937-4712. <http://www.cambridge.org/us/catalogue/catalogue.asp?isbn=052166196X>.

The Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies Coalition monitors emerging research on oral health and pregnancy. They can be reached for additional information at: Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies Coalition, 121 North Washington Street, Suite 300, Alexandria, VA 22314. Phone: 703-836-6110; Web site: <http://www.hmhb.org>.

The American Dental Association provides information about pregnancy and oral health at <http://www.ada.org/public/topics/pregnancy.asp>.

Improving Women's Health and Perinatal Outcomes: The Impact of Oral Diseases (2002) and the "snapshot" version are available from the Johns Hopkins Women's and Children's Health Policy Center. They may be ordered by calling 443-287-7277, or visiting www.jhsph.edu/wchpc/publications/#women.

The Rhode Island Department of Health Oral Health Program maintains a list of national resources appropriate for health professionals, teachers, and families. Visit them at <http://www.health.state.ri.us/disease/primarycare/oralhealth/index.php>.

References

(1) Madianos PN, Lieff S, Murtha AP, Boggess KA, Auten RL, Jr., Beck JD et al. Maternal periodontitis and prematurity. Part II: Maternal infection and fetal exposure. *Ann Periodontol* 2001; 6(1):175-182.

(2) Offenbacher S, Lieff S, Boggess KA, Murtha AP, Madianos PN, Champagne CM et al. Maternal periodontitis and prematurity. Part I: Obstetric outcome of prematurity and growth restriction. *Ann Periodontol* 2001; 6(1):164-174.

The ACNM "QuickInfo" series was developed by the Department of Professional Services to respond to common inquiries, summarizing ACNM resources regarding a particular topic, as well as listing selected literature and a variety of other resources. Your feedback is welcomed; contact Professional Services at 240-485-1800 or info@acnm.org. 9/27/2002.

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