

American Academy of Periodontology Statement Regarding Periodontal Management of the Pregnant Patient*

Emerging science indicates that women with periodontal diseases may be at greater risk of delivering preterm, low birth weight babies. For this reason, the American Academy of Periodontology recommends that women who are pregnant or planning pregnancy undergo periodontal examinations. Appropriate preventive or therapeutic services, if indicated, should be provided.

Research has demonstrated that certain risk factors such as smoking, alcohol use, poor diet, genitourinary infections, and stress raise the risk of having a preterm or low birth weight baby. Indeed, one of eight babies is born prematurely. Of these births, 25% occur with no known risk factors. Recent findings, however, support what some researchers have suspected since 1931: periodontal diseases in the mother may have harmful effects on the developing fetus.

Preventive oral care services should be provided as early in pregnancy as possible. However, women should be encouraged to achieve a high level of oral hygiene prior to becoming pregnant and throughout their pregnancies. If examination indicates a need for periodontal scaling and root planing or more involved periodontal treatment, these procedures are usually

scheduled early in the second trimester. The presence of acute infection, abscess, or other potentially disseminating sources of sepsis may warrant prompt intervention, irrespective of the stage of pregnancy.

Diagnosis and treatment considerations of the pregnant mother include:

1. Diagnosis and evaluation of the patient's periodontal condition and medical status.
2. Education of the patient regarding the possible impact of periodontal infection on pregnancy outcomes, and periodontal prevention and treatment options.
3. Consideration of consultation with the patient's health care professional: a) to ascertain whether other risk factors such as gestational diabetes or high blood pressure are present; and b) to advise that professional of the periodontal status of the patient and any proposed treatment.
4. Consideration of gestational period, status of pregnancy, and concomitant risk factors for periodontitis that may influence pregnancy outcomes.
5. Periodontal therapy and patient motivation to establish and maintain periodontal health.

Periodontal health is a component of general health. Prevention and treatment of periodontal diseases are important to maintain health. For pregnant women, proper periodontal examination and treatment, if indicated, can have a beneficial effect on the health of their babies.

* This statement was developed under the direction of the Task Force on Periodontal Treatment of Pregnant Women and approved by the Board of Trustees of the American Academy of Periodontology in January 2004.