

Caring for baby's teeth starts before birth

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editorial

Care for a child's teeth and gums can start even before the baby is born.
Pregnancy causes many hormonal changes, among these the rise of estrogen and progesterone increases the risk of developing oral health problems, like gingivitis and periodontitis.
The presence of maternal periodontal diseases and active infections has been associated with adverse pregnancy outcomes, such as preterm birth, preeclampsia, gestational diabetes and foetal loss.
Therefore, it is important to educate pregnant women about their oral hygiene and the importance of taking care of their newborn's oral health.
J. Courtad and A. Horowitz devised six steps to help us in promoting oral health (ADA Convention- 2016 Denver):

1. Asking right questions such as "Has there been any change in your health history since your last visit?" and "When did you brush your teeth last?" is recommended in order to find out wether your patient is pregnant and to get to know her dental care better.
2. Know your audience: Mothers are increasingly informed about childbearing, however not every piece of information is correct! Let them know what they are doing well and do not sound like you are preaching to them.
3. Use informal language.
4. Emphasize the need to get dental treatments and to prevent decay: Parents can pass bacteria to their newborns, therefore we want mothers to have a healthy mouth before they give birth!
5. Mom and dad as first dentists: Teach parents about nutrition and when and how to clean their children's mouth.
6. Listen to patients and confirm what they heard: Ask the patient to tell you what she is going to do at home and confirm.

As pregnant women are more receptive to oral health information than in any other moment in their life, our aim is to take this opportunity by providing good prevention information and instilling healthy habits as early as possible.



The Letter to the Editor should be **no longer than 300 words** and submitted to: ***luigipaglia@hotmail.com*** along with a head-and-shoulder photo of the author.