

Management of Oral Health During Pregnancy

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Abstract

Good oral health is an important aspect towards overall health for all the women throughout their lifespan. For every expecting women and also women those who are of reproductive age, for them health status of their oral cavity is very much an important module of the general health. During pregnancy there is a rapid physiologic change that leads to occurrence of remarkable strain on a woman's body together with the oral cavity. Both intended for mother and children, maintaining and achieving good oral health is very important. There are evidences that poor wellbeing of the mother such as dental decay, periodontal diseases previous to and during pregnancy have been linked to poor birth for example preterm birth and low birth weight. Oral health is a significant part of overall health. During pregnancy, an expectant women goes through lot of hormonal changes and these hormones sometimes increase the risk of gingival diseases that will hamper the health of any would me mother and might increase the menace of premature delivery or low birth weight infant. It is very much necessary that oral health care need should be recognized for every pregnant women and it is also the sole responsibility of every pregnant women that they should feel responsible care of their oral health as an important aspect of their pregnancy course. This review article highlights the importance of health of oral cavity for all expectant pregnant women.

Keywords: *Pregnancy, Oral Health, Precautions.*

Introduction

For every expecting women and also women those who are of reproductive age, for them health status of their oral cavity is very much an important module of the general health. During pregnancy there is a rapid physiologic change that leads to occurrence of remarkable strain on a woman's body that includes whole of the oral cavity. Both for mother and children, maintaining and achieving good oral health is very important. There are evidences that poor wellbeing of

the mother such as dental decay, periodontal diseases previous to and during pregnancy have been linked to poor birth for example preterm birth and low birth weight. With respect to all these, according to National Maternal and Child Oral Health Resource Centre (NMCOHRC, 2008), enforcement of healthy oral habits for women during pregnancy time plays a very important role in promoting the oral health for their children following birth. Therefore in general, healthy oral cavity is an important aspect towards overall health for all the women throughout their lifetime.¹ This review article highlights the importance of oral health for pregnant women.

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Periodontal diseases and preterm/low birth weight babies:

According to evidences it has been reported that periodontal disease is a type of infection caused by bacteria which can be noticeable in up to 40% of women who are pregnant which can lead to devastation of the gums, bones as well as ligaments opinionated by teeth. Many researchers have correlated periodontal

disease with premature delivery where there are chances of delivery earlier than 37 weeks of gestation as well as low birth weight where the new born baby may have weight less than 5.5 pounds.² Poor health outcomes will definitely result in infant mortality as well as long term health complications amongst infants.³

Protocols for health sector workers regarding health care of oral cavity during pregnancy: The health care professionals should take part in a key role in making the women for healthy pregnancies by providing oral health education. They should also link the pregnant women to dental check up during their pregnancy period. Surrounded by the health care system, multiple health professionals from all the required fields should reach pregnant women to provide proper health care.⁴

Protocols to be followed by the pregnant women.^{5,6}

1. Brushing your teeth two times a day by using tooth brush and fluoride toothpaste and dental floss daily.
2. Foods that contain sugars should be limited to mealtimes only.
3. Carbonated beverages should be avoided during pregnancy and water or low fat milk should be chosen.
4. Natural fruits should be preferred instead of fruit juice to fulfil the suggested dose of fruit intake regularly.
5. Required dental management should be obtained previous to delivery during the second trimester of the pregnancy and the dentist should always be in contact during this period for any kind of emergency consultant.
6. Small amounts of nutritious foods should be taken throughout the day.
7. Maintain oral hygiene during pregnancy especially by brushing two times a day with fluoridated toothpaste.

Oral disease management for pregnant women^{7,8}

Dental health professionals should develop a comprehensive treatment plan such as:

- (a) A proper plan should be developed for all the dental needs and maintenance of optimal oral health as well as disease prevention strategies to be based on benefits, risks and all alternatives.

- (b) Before delivery timetable should be plan out to carry all the procedures.
- (c) Emergency care and treatment to be provided strictly during the second trimester of the pregnancy if required.
- (d) Dentist should give proper instructions regarding intake of medication for dental pain during pregnancy.
- (e) Oral health education should be provided by the dentists to reduce the bacterial load during pregnancy.

Drug administration during pregnancy⁹: All dental professionals should mandatorily do their duty to fully inform about the safety of drugs administration during pregnancy to all the expected women. According to FDA, it has issued specific guidelines to endow with therapeutic guidance for using drugs during pregnancy. Major medications are usually contraindicated during pregnancy because of its adverse effects both for the mother and the child. Paracetamol is generally considered as the safest drug during pregnancy. Others drugs especially analgesics and antibiotics that are most commonly prescribed for dental pain need to be avoided during pregnancy.^{10,11} That is why, it is very important for the pregnant women to take good care of their teeth and gums during pregnancy.¹ Because there will be lot of hormonal changes during pregnancy which will increase the risk of developing gingival diseases that will ultimately affect the health of developing baby.

Tips to maintain good oral health care during pregnancy

Before Pregnancy: Dental appointment should be made prior to before getting pregnant so that the existing dental treatment can be done in advance of getting pregnant. Along with all the dental treatment, regular maintenance of oral cavity like brushing two times daily with toothpaste plus rinsing mouth after every meal should be done.¹²

After Pregnancy:

- (a) Dentist should be aware of pregnancy so that routine dental care should be carried out. Any urgent procedure can be done in the second trimester as well as all elective dental procedures should be postponed after the delivery.
- (b) All the history of medications should be mentioned

to the dentist as well as if any specific medical advice has been instructed by the gynaecologists then the dentists should be aware of this.¹³

- (c) Dental x rays should be done if required during pregnancy but safety precautions measure has to be taken properly by the dentist. Now a day advance technology in x-ray has been considered as much safer than in past decades.¹⁴
- (d) Dental check up should not be skipped simply because of pregnancy. During pregnancy lot of hormonal changes takes place which can increase the risk of dental diseases that is why regular dental check up should be done.¹⁵
- (e) Good oral hygiene practice should be followed in order to prevent or reduce oral health problem.
- (f) If any pregnant women is coping with morning sickness and if it is keeping away from brushing teeth then the toothpaste should be change to a bland tasting. Dentist should be recommending the required toothpaste brands for pregnant women.¹⁶
- (g) Mouthwash should be used for rinsing if any pregnant women suffers from morning sickness and have frequent history of vomiting.

Effect of oral health on babies: During pregnancy, women is already on the verge of being a mother. So she has to take care of her and should focus on assembling everything perfect for the baby. A mother will always care for her and her unborn child and not only general health but also oral health. Routine visit to the dentist will enable to measure the current oral health status as well as rule out a preparation for the dental treatment needs after the delivery. When pregnant women care her own mouth, it will definitely make a disparity for her baby, equally before plus after birth.¹⁷

Facts:

- 1. If routine night time brushing and dental flossing gets skipped then it might direct to plaque as well as bacteria build up and ultimately tooth decay.¹⁸
- 2. Lots of hormonal changes can cause danger to the health of would be mother's gingival health plus it might cause pregnancy gingivitis. Bleeding gums due to inflamed gingiva as well as untreated gingivitis will lead to periodontitis. Several research reported that there is a definite link between preterm delivery, low birth weight babies and gingivitis.

- 3. Pregnant women who are having history of frequent morning sickness should be aware of stomach acid that create its way hooked on to the mouth and can deteriorate the strength of tooth enamel. This will put the pregnant women at a greater risk for dental diseases.
- 4. All pregnant women needs vitamin which contains folic acid during pregnancy.
- 5. Eating the right food with proper nutrition will keeps the mouth healthy as well as strong.
- 6. A nutritious meal containing calcium as well as limited amount of sugars in the food are best for both mother's and baby's oral health.

Mother's oral health is associated to the health of her unborn baby –as bacteria can be traced in her mouth.^{19,20} If the amount of bacteria will be more in any pregnant women, then it has chances that it will cross the threshold the bloodstream through her gingival tissues and travel into the uterus by triggering the production of chemicals called prostaglandins – that are supposed to induce premature labour. After the delivery of the baby, there are also few chances of potential vertical transmission of bacteria from the mother to her newborn. A pregnant women should always keep it in mind that she has to take care for her own oral health as well as her unborn baby's health.^{21,22}

Anaesthesia: Local anaesthesia with epinephrine can be used during pregnancy but only during second trimester if indicated for extraction or any surgical procedures in dentistry. The drug is absorbed slowly in case of lidocaine with epinephrine which will prolongs the length of anaesthesia.²³⁻²⁶

According to National Consensus Statement, few guidelines have been issued for pregnant women^{27,28}

- (a) Guidelines given should be customized based on risk assessment.
- (b) Get routine dental care.
- (c) Good home care should be practiced.
- (d) Healthy and nutritious food should be eaten.
- (e) Fluoride composed water should be consumed.
- (f) 600 micrograms of folic acid should be consumed.
- (g) Prenatal classes should be participated.
- (h) Tobacco related habits should be stopped.

- (i) Second hand smoke should be avoided.
- (j) Consumption of alcoholic beverages should be stopped.

Conclusion

Oral health is an important part of general health. During pregnancy, women goes through lot of hormonal changes and these hormones sometimes increase the risk of gingival diseases that will hamper the health of expectant women and might increase the threat of premature delivery or low birth weight infant. It is very much important that the doctor recognizes oral health care need for every pregnant women and it is also the sole responsibility of every pregnant women that they should take proper care of their oral cavity as an important aspect of their pregnancy course.

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