How does pregnancy affect my oral health?

The military service no longer allows routine dental treatment to family members. However, the Ft Rucker Dental Command wanted to provide dental information to the family members at Ft Rucker and the surrounding communities. We hope to provide an article once a month that may answer many questions concerning treatment provided by your dentists.

Recently, I have noticed a number of ladies whom are pregnant. Pregnancy should be a joyous time. Even with the joys of pregnancy come many health issues and questions. Oral health and good oral hygiene are areas that are very important during pregnancy. This article should give you some guidance on your **oral health, treatment, medications you can take during your pregnancy and radiation exposure from dental x-rays.**

RADIATION EXPOSURE

Source of Radiation	Dose Rads
Chest X-ray	0.560
Skull X-ray	0.004
Daily background radiation	0.0004
Full mouth dental 18 x-rays lead apron	0.0001

Drug Administration During Pregnancy

Drug	1st Trimester	2nd and 3rd Trimester
Anesthetic		
Lido cane	Yes	Yes
Mepivicaine	Yes	Yes
Pain Meds		
Ibuprofen (Motrin)	Yes	Yes (avoid in late trimester)
Acetaminophen (Tylenol)	Yes	Yes
Codeine	No	Yes
Antibiotics		
Penicillin	Yes	Yes
Erythromycin	Yes	Yes
Cephalosporins	Yes	Yes

Tetracycline	No	No
Streptomycin	No	No
Sedatives		
Nitro oxide with 50% 02	No	Yes
Valium	No	No
Barbiturates	No	No

Charts: Dental Management of Medically Compromised Patients: Little and Falace

It's a myth that calcium is lost from the mother's teeth and "one tooth is lost with every pregnancy." But you may experience some changes in your oral health during pregnancy. The primary change is a surge in hormones-particularly an increase in estrogen and progesterone-which is linked to an increase in the amount of plaque on your teeth.

How does a build-up plaque affect me? If the plaque isn't removed, it can cause gingivitis-red, swollen, tender gums that are more likely to bleed. So-called "pregnancy gingivitis" affects more pregnant women to some degree, and generally begins to surface in the second trimester. If you already have gingivitis, the condition is likely to worsen during pregnancy. If untreated, gingivitis can lead to periodontal disease, a more serious form of gum disease.

How can I prevent these problems?
You can prevent gingivitis by keeping your teeth clean, especially near the gum line. You should brush with fluoride toothpaste at least twice a day and after each meal when possible. You should also floss thoroughly each day. If tooth brushing causes morning sickness, rinse your mouth with water or with anti-plaque and fluoride mouthwashes. Good nutrition-particularly plenty of vitamin C and B12-help keep the oral cavity health and strong. More frequent cleanings from the dentist will help control plaque and prevent gingivitis. Controlling plaque also will reduce gum irritation and decrease the likelihood of pregnancy tumors.

When should I see my dentist?
If you're planning to become pregnant or suspect you're pregnant, you should see a dentist right away. Otherwise, you should schedule a check-up in your first trimester for a cleaning. Your dentist will assess your oral condition and map out a dental plan for the rest of your pregnancy. A visit to the dentist also is recommended in the second trimester for a cleaning, to monitor changes and to gauge the effectiveness of your oral hygiene. Depending on the patient, another appointment may be scheduled early in the third trimester, but these appointments should be kept as brief as possible.

Are there any procedures I should avoid?

Non-emergency procedures generally can be performed throughout pregnancy, but the **best time for any dental treatment is the fourth through six month.** Women with dental emergencies that create severe pain can be treated during any trimester. If you are in pain or have an oral infection, this can cause undue stress to the fetus. Remember, if you are healthy then your baby is healthy. If X-rays are needed it is advised that only those needed for emergencies should be taken during pregnancy.

The following charts should be helpful concerning medication or X-rays.

The information in this article has been researched, is approved by the American Dental Association and the Academy of General Dentistry. Please contact your local dentist for further questions concerning your oral health during pregnancy.

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