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Pregnancy and Periodontal Diseases

During pregnancy, your body experiences hormonal changes. These changes can affect many of the tissues in your body, including your gums. Your gums can become sensitive, and at times may react strongly to the hormonal fluctuations thereby worsening any gum inflammation that you may have. Without proper oral care and treatment, relatively mild gum problems may turn into a more advanced form of the periodontal diseases called periodontitis. In recent years, you may have heard that periodontitis can contribute to pregnancy complications such as preeclampsia or premature delivery.

Periodontitis and Preeclampsia

Pregnant women who experience periodontal disease progression during their pregnancies may be twice as likely to develop preeclampsia as a complication of pregnancy. Preeclampsia is

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characterized by high blood pressure and the presence of protein in the urine. It can put you and your baby at risk for severe complications. In addition to preeclampsia, periodontitis can trigger increased levels of biological fluids which can induce preterm labor.

Periodontitis and Preterm Low Birth Weight

Scientific data suggest that women whose periodontal conditions worsen during pregnancy are at significant risk of having a premature or low birth weight baby. In fact, pregnant women who have periodontitis may be up to seven times more likely to have a baby who is born too early and too small.

The good news is researchers are making strides to find out exactly how the periodontal diseases affect pregnancy outcomes. Several early studies have found that treating periodontitis during pregnancy may significantly reduce the risks of a preterm birth. Preventing gum problems from developing during the stresses of pregnancy also appears to be important in improving the health of both the mother and baby.

Every mother wants to reduce the risk of having an unhealthy baby; therefore, the American Academy of Periodontology recommends that women considering pregnancy include a periodontal evaluation as part of their prenatal care because a healthy mouth will keep you and your baby smiling.

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