



NEWS from the Children's Dental Health Project

For Immediate Release —
Thursday, August 1, 2013

Contact: Matt Jacob
202-417-3600 or
mjacob@cdhp.org

CDHP Applauds New Recommendations on Dental Health for Pregnant Women

Although receiving dental care during pregnancy is safe for both women and their developing babies, and it can prevent long-term health problems among children, roughly one out of four women do not receive dental care during pregnancy. Unfortunately, many dentists are reluctant to see pregnant patients. In its efforts to strengthen pregnant women's access to care, the Children's Dental Health Project (CDHP) welcomes new recommendations from the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG).

In its [recommendations](#), ACOG notes that women with poor dental health "may harbor high levels of *Streptococcus mutans*" — the primary bacteria that cause tooth decay. ACOG's Committee on Health Care for Underserved Women advises medical practitioners that "women should routinely be counseled about the maintenance of good oral health as well as the safety and importance of oral health care during pregnancy."

CDHP Executive Director Patrice Pascual thanked ACOG for issuing the document. "The recommendations emphasize that it's safe for women to get dental care at any point during a pregnancy," said Pascual. "We applaud ACOG's leadership in raising awareness of the importance of oral health for pregnant women."

CDHP has worked with diverse organizations to both raise awareness of this issue and strengthen pregnant women's access to dental care. Much of CDHP's recent work in this arena has been supported by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. CDHP is assisting the Michigan Department of Community Health in developing guidelines for perinatal care, create an action plan for implementing these guidelines, and identify metrics for assessing progress.

Since 2001, CDHP has worked extensively with state officials and stakeholder groups to improve the dental health of pregnant women and infants:

- CDHP will assist the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services with disseminating new materials (InsureKidsNow.gov) that the agency is preparing — with CDHP's input — to educate pregnant women about the importance of accessing dental care.
- CDHP played a crucial role in helping to secure a federal rule requiring all states that participate in PRAMS (Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System) to include a set of dental questions. These questions will enable policymakers to gauge challenges that pregnant women face getting dental services and related trends.
- For several years, CDHP led a project jointly with the American Association of Pediatric Dentistry, which established a committee and developed clinical guidelines on perinatal care and infants' oral health. The work and goals of this collaboration are outlined in [this report](#).

- CDHP staff participated in a 2011 meeting of national experts — convened by the U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration — that produced guidance for medical and dental professionals, as well as tips these professionals can share with pregnant women.

Organizations wishing to partner with CDHP on this issue should contact Meg Booth, Director of Policy, at mbooth@cdhp.org or call 202-417-3598.

#

Learn more about CDHP at www.cdhp.org. Follow us on Facebook or on Twitter @KidsTeethMatter