



Promoting Oral Health in Pregnant Women

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Children's Dental Health Project

Children's Dental Health Project is a national non-profit organization working since 1997 to advance policies that improve children's access to oral health

CDHP commitment:

- Preventing childhood dental decay
- Engaging policymakers
- Promoting solutions

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Improving Perinatal and Infant Oral Health Project

- Maternal and Child Health Bureau grant
- Collaboration between Children's Dental Health Project and the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry
- Seeks to promote awareness of and access to perinatal and infant oral health on national, state, and local levels

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Objectives

- Provide an overview of the significance of perinatal oral health and the importance of dental care
- Review recent professional advancements and clinical policies
- Identify policy opportunities to promote and expand perinatal oral health

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Why is Perinatal Oral Health Important?

- Oral health is key to overall health and wellbeing
- Pregnancy increases women's risk for oral infections
- Research exhibits associations between periodontal disease and birth outcomes
- Perinatal oral health contributes to establishing good oral health for children

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Significance of Dental Care

Accessing dental care during pregnancy is important to:

- prevent periodontal disease
- manage tooth decay
- decrease risk of poor birth outcomes
- decrease risk of pre-eclampsia
- delay transmission of maternal oral bacteria to the infant



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Prevalence of Disease

- “Pregnancy gingivitis” estimated to occur in 30 – 100% of pregnant women
- National survey findings among 20-34 year old persons: untreated caries 28%
- Periodontal disease can be detected in 37-46% of women of reproductive age, and up to 30% of pregnant women

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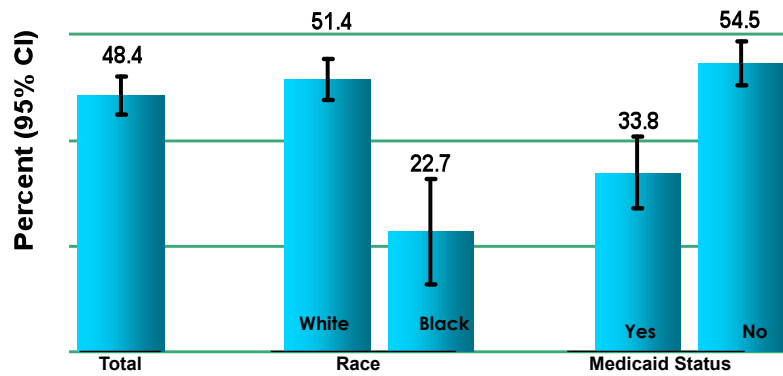


Dental Care Utilization

- In the U.S., nearly 1 in 5 women do not visit the dentist during the year before they become pregnant
- A large proportion of women (35-44%) do not receive oral health care while pregnant
- A 2004 study found that less than one third (30%) of women visited a dentist in the 2-9 months following the birth of their infants
- Among pregnant women who report having oral problems, only about half seek oral health care

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Dental Visit (%) During Pregnancy By Race and Participation in Medicaid



Source: PRAMS, 2002



How Does Perinatal Oral Health Impact Infant Oral Health?

- Periodontal disease is associated with adverse birth outcomes: preterm birth, low birth weight, and gestational diabetes
- Tooth decay is an infectious disease process established by age 2 through vertical transmission
- Children whose mothers have poor oral health are at greater risk for having oral infections at young ages and for developing dental caries

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Advancements in Perinatal Oral Health

- Increased awareness of the link between oral and systemic health, and the role of pregnancy
- Evidence documents an association between periodontal disease and adverse pregnancy outcomes, including preterm birth and low birth weight in infants
- Research confirms the safety of oral health care during the perinatal period

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Program and Policy Developments

- Perinatal clinical guidance: ADA, AAP, ACOG, AAPD, Bright Futures
- 2006 New York State Guidelines
- 2010 California Guidelines
- 2006 and 2008 MCHB-sponsored perinatal oral health forums
- 2007 Maternal and Child Health Bureau Perinatal Oral Health Workgroup
- National Maternal and Child Oral Health Resource Center materials

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Barriers to Care

- Lack of awareness of relationship between oral and overall health
- Concern regarding safety of dental x-rays, materials, and medications
- Low priority given to oral health
- Provider reluctance to provide care during pregnancy
- Lack of insurance coverage

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Medicaid Coverage

- The problem: dental coverage for adults, including pregnant women, is optional and varies widely
- In the current fiscal environment, states may consider reducing or eliminating dental benefits in Medicaid
- Many states are implementing innovative approaches to increase awareness and utilization of dental care during pregnancy
- Coverage is the link between awareness and access to care

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Connecting Science, Policy, and Access to Care

- Science confirms the safety and importance of dental care during pregnancy
- There is a need for policies and programs on the national, state, and local levels that link women to care
- Establishing and protecting Medicaid coverage of dental care for pregnant women is critical to promoting overall health for all women

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Expanding Access to Dental Care for Pregnant Women: Recommendations for Policymakers

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Policy Opportunities to Promote Perinatal Oral Health

- Professional policy: Promote safety and importance of care to prenatal and dental providers
- Programmatic policy: Integrate oral health into existing programs serving perinatal women
- Public policy: Advocate for state and federal policies supporting access to care, payment, and surveillance

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Increase Awareness Among Pregnant Women

- Integrate oral health into prenatal classes, health programs, and other social support services
- Create and disseminate educational materials at appropriate reading levels, and with culturally sensitive messages
- Utilize creative strategies to communicate with pregnant women
- Provide information to women regarding local providers, and facilitate referrals

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Professional Policy Opportunities

- Facilitate partnerships with and between providers
- Encourage prenatal providers to integrate oral health into routine care and refer to a dentist
- Assist dental providers in reducing barriers to accessing care, and encourage accepting patients in Medicaid/SCHIP
- Advocate for national perinatal oral health clinical guidelines

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Programmatic Policy Opportunities

- Identify organizations serving pregnant women (WIC, Healthy Start, Head Start)
- Integrate oral health education and referral into existing programs
- Assist in reducing barriers to accessing care
- Facilitate partnerships and linkages with providers

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Public Policy Opportunities

- Advocate for Medicaid coverage of dental services for pregnant and post-partum women:
creating a specific dental benefit for pregnant women protects critical health services
- Advocate for expanded Medicaid coverage of women during the perinatal period
- Advocate for state and national surveillance of dental care need and utilization
- Advocate for policies that support prevention and public education

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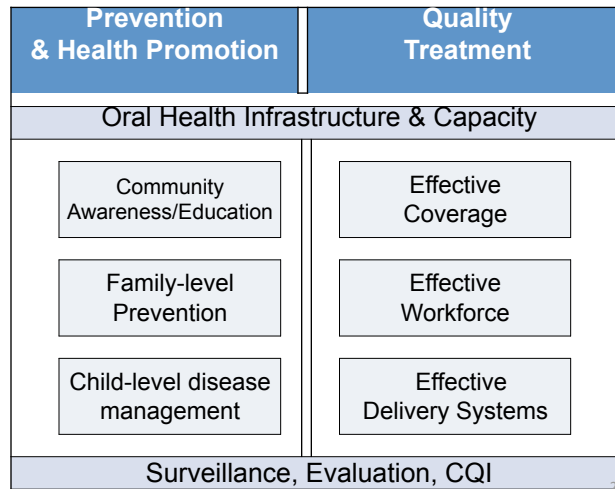
Medicaid Coverage of Women during the Perinatal Period

- Extend dental coverage after pregnancy
- Increase income eligibility for pregnant women
- Implement presumptive eligibility
- Implement expedited application processes
- Promote outreach and enrollment

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Opportunities in Recent Legislation: CDHP's Systems Approach



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Opportunities in CHIPRA and Health Care Reform

- Prevention
- Infrastructure
- Surveillance
- Workforce and training
- Coverage

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Opportunities in CHIPRA and Health Care Reform

- Prevention
 - New parent education on preventing ECC
 - 5 year public education campaign to promote oral health
 - Disease management demonstration grants
- Infrastructure & Surveillance
 - CDC infrastructure grants expanded to 50 states- includes development of state oral health plans that address oral health promotion across the lifespan (e.g., pregnancy)
 - Mandatory inclusion of oral health reporting on pregnant women in PRAMS

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Opportunities in CHIPRA and Health Care Reform

- Workforce and Training
 - Title VII dental workforce training program expanded to dental students and practicing dentists
 - Line-item funding for training of oral health workforce
- Coverage
 - CHIPRA option to cover pregnant women
 - Medicaid expansion for pregnant women over age 21

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Summary

- Oral health is significant to the overall health of pregnant women and their children
- Dental care is safe throughout pregnancy; however utilization is low
- Significant policy opportunities exist to expand access to dental care for pregnant women, especially publicly-insured women
- Creative partnerships and linkages offer great promise in improving perinatal oral health

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