

For Starters

Healthy Start of North Central Florida Newsletter

Spring 2010

More Than a Pretty Smile

Why Oral Health Is Important for Pregnant Moms and Babies

Everyone wants a beautiful smile. When in fact, it's more important to strive toward good oral health. Oral health includes the teeth, gums, jawbone and supporting tissues. This issue of "For Starters" discusses the special need for good oral health for pregnant women, as well as oral health concerns for babies such as teething, care of babies' teeth and thumb-sucking.

How Does Pregnancy Affect a Woman's Teeth and Gums? If possible, it's best for women to have a dental checkup before becoming pregnant to make sure there are no dental problems that might affect their babies. After becoming pregnant, about half of women develop a condition called "pregnancy gingivitis." This may cause the gums to bleed and become swollen, red and tender. A more serious gum infection, called "periodontal disease," destroys attachment fibers and supporting bone that hold teeth in the mouth. If this condition is present, it's important to see a periodontist—a dentist who specializes in treating the disease.

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Is Thumb-Sucking Bad for Children's Teeth?

Sucking is one of a baby's natural reflexes. Sucking on a thumb, finger or pacifier is perfectly normal and may make the baby feel soothed, secure and relaxed. Most children stop between two and four years of age. When permanent teeth begin to come in, usually about five or six years of age, thumb-sucking may create crowded, crooked teeth or bite problems. A pediatric dentist can suggest ways to address a prolonged thumb-sucking habit.

Healthy Start is for pregnant women and their newborns. Just ask your health care provider and say "YES" to a healthy start for you and your baby!



Healthy Start
of North Central Florida

Every baby deserves a healthy start

Care Coordinators

To find out more about Healthy Start services, call your local Healthy Start Care Coordinator. Be sure to ask about courses in how to quit smoking, parenting, breastfeeding and more!

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Gilchrist County
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Oral Health for Moms and Babies, cont.

Because pregnancy can affect women's oral health, women should see their dentist on a regular basis and make sure they know how to maintain good oral hygiene as well as a healthy, nutritious diet.

How Does a Woman's Oral Health Affect Her Baby? A number of studies have shown a relationship between periodontal disease and preterm, low birthweight babies. Some researchers believe that a chemical found in oral bacteria, called "prostaglandin," stimulates labor. Very high levels of prostaglandin are found in women with severe cases of periodontal disease. Babies who are born too soon are most often of low birthweight and at risk for a number of problems common to premature babies. Maintaining good oral health is an important way for women to safeguard their unborn babies.

What Can Be Done if Periodontal Disease Is Present? A periodontist may recommend a non-surgical procedure called "scaling and root planing" to



remove plaque and tartar from deep pockets and remove bacterial toxins from the roots. The procedure may reduce the risk of preterm births and may also help improve the discomforts of pregnancy gingivitis such as swollen, tender gums.



My Two Front Teeth

Baby Teeth Usually, a baby's first teeth begin to appear between age six months and one year. Most children have a full set of

primary "baby" teeth (20 in all) in place by age three. Even though baby teeth aren't permanent, they are as important as adult teeth. Baby teeth help children chew food and speak. They hold space in the jaw for the adult teeth, so that they can grow in straight.

Teething When a baby's teeth come through the gums, it may cause the baby to

be fussy, sleepless, lose his or her appetite or drool. The gums may be sore or tender. Sometimes a watery sac, called an "eruption cyst," may develop at the point where a new tooth is breaking through. These are usually harmless and should be left alone. There are a number of things parents can do to ease the discomfort of teething:

- Rub the gums gently with a clean finger or a wet gauze pad
- Offer a clean teething ring or pacifier for the baby to chew on

It's comforting to know that the baby's discomfort is temporary, and he or she is on the way to a beautiful smile.

Caring for those Cute Little Teeth

When Should Dental Care Begin?

Most pediatric dentists recommend that a baby have his or her first dental checkup by one year of age. By then, the primary or "baby" teeth have begun to appear. The dentist can check for any problems and inform parents on how to care for their baby's teeth.

How Can Parents Prevent Tooth Decay?

There are a number of things parents can do to make sure their baby's teeth are protected from decay. Wipe the gums gently with a soft, wet cloth after each feeding and at bedtime. After baby teeth appear, gently brush with a soft infant toothbrush with only a smear of fluoridated toothpaste. Do not put the baby to bed with a bottle of milk, formula, juice or other sweetened liquids, as the sugars in the liquid remain in contact with the teeth for a long period of time and can cause decay. This also can happen during the day if the baby uses a bottle filled with these liquids as a pacifier. Finally, make sure the baby's diet contains fruits and vegetables rather than sweet, starchy, sticky foods.



Checklist for Care of the Baby's Teeth

Birth to 6 Months of Age

- Clean gums with a soft, wet cloth after feedings and at bedtime
- Be aware of bottle-feeding habits that can cause decay

Six to 12 Months of Age

- Consult pediatric dentist after baby teeth begin to appear
- Brush teeth after feeding and at bedtime with a soft infant toothbrush

Twelve to 24 Months of Age

- Follow recommended schedule of dental visits
- Help the child to properly brush and rinse

Did You Know?

It's a myth that calcium is lost from the mother's teeth during pregnancy. Rather, calcium for the baby's needs comes from the calcium in foods that the mother eats. Thus, it's important that a pregnant mother's diet includes dairy products and any supplements recommended by the doctor to ensure she is getting all the calcium she and her baby need.

What services does Healthy Start offer?

Healthy Start provides FREE services for women, babies and children (up to age 3). Services include education and support in:

- Childbirth
- Parenting
- Breastfeeding
- Nutrition
- Smoking cessation
- Pregnancy education
- Between-pregnancy care
- Mental health counseling, including stress management and postpartum depression

How do I know if I qualify for Healthy Start services?

Healthy Start is not based on income, education or ethnic background. Healthy Start services are based on the results of a screening—a simple set of questions.

In the early stages of your pregnancy, your prenatal care provider will ask if you'd like to take the Healthy Start **Prenatal Risk Screen**. After your baby is born, be sure to ask at the hospital about the Healthy Start **Infant Risk Screen**.

By saying "Yes" to the Healthy Start Prenatal and Infant Risk Screens you open the door to obtaining our free services.

For more information about Healthy Start, call your local Care Coordinator as listed on page two or call:

1-800-451-BABY

Useful Websites

American Academy of Family Physicians

Wide range of information, including oral health for pregnant women and babies

www.familydoctor.org

American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry

Pediatric dentistry website

Phone: 312-337-2169

www.aapd.org

American Academy of Periodontology

Periodontal dentistry website

www.perio.org

American Dental Association

Information on all aspects of dental care

Phone: 312-440-2500

www.ada.org

National Maternal and Child Oral Health Resource Center

Information on maternal and child oral health

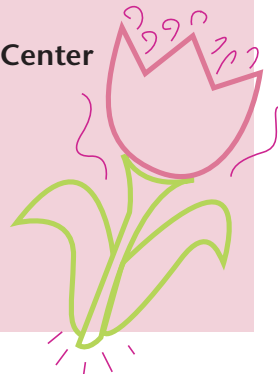
www.mchoralhealth.org

National Women's Health Information Center

Comprehensive information on health topics for women

Phone: 1-800-994-9662

www.womenshealth.gov



Healthy Start Speakers

If you would like a presentation or more information regarding Healthy Start, contact your local Community Liaison:

Meredith Kauth
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Healthy Start of North Central Florida Board of Directors

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Oral Health for Mothers and Babies

WORD SEEK PUZZLE

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H E P L A Q U E V S I O O S
U R M B O Q P N S N Y P V M
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CALCIUM
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DROOL
GINGIVITIS
GUMS
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PLAQUE
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SCALING
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TEETHING
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