Gum Disease during Pregnancy

Multiple studies have found gum disease to be an independent risk factor for preterm labor (before 37 weeks) and/or low birthweight (less than 5 pounds, 8 ounces)

What is gum disease?

Also referred to as periodontal disease, gum disease is a common but largely preventable condition where the bacteria in plaque cause inflammation of the gums and affect the supporting areas around the teeth. A “silent” disease, its symptoms may go unnoticed in the early stages. Left untreated, it can become painful and lead to very serious problems, including tooth loss.

There are two main types:

- Gingivitis: A mild form of gum disease, marked by red, swollen, and/or bleeding gums.
- Periodontitis: A serious condition causing gums to recede from the teeth, creating pockets that become infected. As the disease worsens, the body’s immune system may respond by destroying the tissues and bone that hold the teeth in place.

Gum disease during pregnancy

Pregnant women can be more prone to gum disease due to fluctuating hormones and increased blood volume.

The same bacteria that inflame the gums can end up in the woman’s bloodstream and target the baby, potentially triggering preterm labor or low birth weight.

What is gum disease?

Treating gum disease?

Your treatment may include one or a combination of the following treatment options, all of which are safe during pregnancy.

You may need one or a combination of the following treatment options, all of which are safe during pregnancy. Your treatment plan will depend upon the severity of your gum disease and other factors.

- Good oral hygiene at home
- Professional cleanings
- Antibiotics
- Scaling and root planning or deep cleaning
- Surgery

Bad breath  • Red or swollen gums  • Gums that easily bleed
- Tender, sore gums  • Pain or trouble chewing
- Tooth sensitivity  • Loose teeth  • Receding gums

Notes:

- How to Treat Gum Disease During Pregnancy; American Pregnancy Association, September 2016
- Oral Health During Pregnancy; American Family Physician, April 2008
- Periodontal Therapy Reduces the Rate of Preterm Low Birth Weight in Women With Pregnancy-Associated Gingivitis; Journal of Periodontology; November 2005
- Preterm Birth; World Health Organization, November 2015
- Periodontal Disease and Preterm Birth, is There any Relationship? JBR Journal of Interdisciplinary Medicine and Dental Science; July 2016
- Dental Care During Pregnancy; March of Dimes; January 2013
- Dispelling Myths About Gum Disease; American Academy of Periodontology; 2010
- Periodontal (Gum) Disease: Causes, Symptoms, and Treatments; National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research; September 2013
- Low birth weight; March of Dimes; October 2014
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