

## Pregnancy & Dentistry

By Dr. Chiann Fan Gibson

For those soon-to-be mothers, have you ever wondered whether your teeth and gums can be affected by pregnancy? As a dentist who is expecting a baby boy in January, (I am currently 6 months pregnant), I believe this article might be helpful for those who are pregnant or trying to conceive.

### Planning

If you already have good hygiene habits and routinely have dental checkups, you are less likely to have dental problems during your pregnancy, though certain changes may happen anyway. Like I always tell my pregnant patients, you should continue to brush your teeth at least twice daily with a fluoride toothpaste, floss daily, and continue to have regular checkups. Your overall health can directly affect your newborns well-being.

For those who are attempting to get pregnant, you may want to inform your dentist. That way elective procedures or procedures that involve the use of X-rays can be done before you conceive. Once you are pregnant, replacing or getting new fillings or other more complex treatments, are usually postponed until the second trimester or after the birth of your child. Your dentist may also defer some X-rays until after the birth.

If X-rays are unavoidable, the dentist will take extra precautions to ensure you and your baby's safety. If you think you may have a dental infection, be sure you see your dentist immediately. A dental infection that goes untreated can have harmful effects on you and your baby.

### Mythbusting

Pregnancy does not automatically cause damage to your teeth. It is a myth that calcium is lost from the mother's teeth during pregnancy. The calcium your baby needs is provided by your diet, not by your teeth. If dietary calcium is inadequate, your body will provide this mineral from stored reserves in your bones. This information is explained in detail through American Dental Association brochures and educational materials.

However, gum problems, vomiting and certain cravings for sugary foods could cause possible dental problems during pregnancy. Pregnant moms' hormone levels rise considerably. These hormones associated with pregnancy can make some women susceptible to gum problems that include bleeding, swelling, gingivitis (gum inflammation) or periodontal disease (this is the chronic gum

infection caused by untreated gingivitis). If this happens, don't panic, but do make sure to see your dentist while continuing to maintain your oral hygiene to limit such possible issues.

Whatever you are experiencing through your pregnancy, keep in contact with your dentist and let them monitor your oral hygiene during the exciting news of your newborn on the way. Dental health is an important part of your overall health, which does have a direct effect on your child. As a dentist who is also experiencing the effects of being pregnant, I can attest personally that your body is changing in many ways, and that includes your dental needs. I share in your joy of a newborn on the way.