



# Promoting Oral Health During Pregnancy: Update on Activities

## October 2015

Since the release of the landmark publication *Oral Health Care During Pregnancy: A National Consensus Statement* in 2012, federal agencies and national, state, and local organizations have continued to launch programs, advance policy, produce resources, and provide education and training to ensure that health professionals as well as pregnant women are aware of

the importance and safety of receiving oral health care during pregnancy. The ultimate goal of these efforts is to improve oral health for pregnant women and their children. This document is the third in a series of updates to highlight national, state, and local activities to promote oral health during pregnancy. Past issues of *Promoting Oral Health During Pregnancy: Update on Activities* are available [online](#).



## Programs and Policy

In 2013, the Health Resources and Services Administration's (HRSA's) Maternal and Child Health Bureau launched the *Perinatal and Infant Oral Health Quality Improvement* (PIOHQP) national initiative. The goal of the initiative is to reduce the prevalence of oral disease in pregnant women and infants through improved access to high-quality oral health care (i.e., preventive services, restorative treatment, education) and increased use of oral health services.

The first phase of the PIOHQP initiative includes a *pilot grant program* (2013–2017), which provides support to three projects. For a description of these projects, see *Promoting Oral Health During Pregnancy: Update on Activities—June 2015*.

The second phase of the PIOHQP initiative is an *expansion grant program* (2015–2019). The purpose of the second phase is to expand the number of targeted demonstrations for replicable integration of high-quality oral health care into perinatal and infant primary-care-delivery systems with statewide reach.



Below is a short description of each project:

- *California:* The project, administered by the California Department of Public Health, will work with the California Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) to identify pregnant women and infants enrolled in Medi-Cal (California’s Medicaid program) who do not access oral health services and will provide this information to the medical insurance plan that serves this population. In turn, the medical insurance plan will notify the assigned perinatal and/or pediatric health professional and encourage oral health assessment and referral to an oral health professional. The project also plans to leverage and expand the use of the existing DHCS system for data collection and analysis and the statewide toll-free Beneficiary Customer Service Line—the Medi-Cal/Denti-Cal “warm transfer” service that links clients to oral health professionals.
- *Colorado:* Cavity Free at Three, administered by the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, will improve primary care health professionals’ ability to assess oral health, provide education, apply fluoride varnish, and make referrals to oral health

professionals and will increase primary care health professionals’ and oral health professionals’ ability to meet the oral health needs of individuals who speak Spanish as their first language. In addition, project staff will work to increase health professionals’ comfort with providing oral health care for pregnant women and infants, craft oral-health-promotion messages, create and support policies that improve access to oral health care, and use data to inform work in real time.

- *Maine:* The statewide initiative, administered by MaineHealth, aims to improve the oral health of pregnant women and infants through a comprehensive, integrated systems-development and quality-improvement initiative based on the Association of State and Territorial Dental Directors Strategic Frameworks to Prevent and Control Early Childhood Tooth Decay and to Promote Perinatal Oral Health. The project will build upon the From the First Tooth™ model and will capitalize on infrastructure across the state; existing partnerships; and continued collaborative work focusing on primary care integration, access to oral health care, and health promotion.
- *Maryland:* The project, administered by the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, Office of Oral Health, will reduce the incidence of early childhood caries, increase pregnant women’s use of preventive oral health care, establish dental



homes for infants by age 1, and reduce dental expenditures. The project will employ multiple strategies to improve the oral health literacy and awareness of pregnant women with low incomes and the oral health behaviors of health professional practitioner groups.

- *New Mexico:* The project, which is a partnership between the Center for Development and Disability, the College of Nursing, and the Dental Medicine Program of the University of New Mexico Health Sciences Center, will integrate an evidence-based model of interprofessional oral health care into the primary care delivered to pregnant women and newborn infants through the Medicaid managed care program of Blue Cross Blue Shield New Mexico across the state. The model, developed under an earlier HRSA grant project, follows evidence-based guidelines developed by the California Dental Association Foundation to implement oral exams, clinical risk-based oral health screening and management, patient education, and referrals to oral health professionals in primary care settings for pregnant women and infants.
- *Rhode Island:* The project, administered by the Rhode Island Department of Health, will collaborate with internal and external partners to develop and implement an electronic dental referral and data-collection system; provide education through the *TeethFirst! Academy* for health professionals and service providers on the importance of oral health for women before, during, and after pregnancy and on the importance of oral health for infants; and train health professionals on how to use the electronic system.
- *Virginia:* The project, administered by the Virginia Department of Health, will focus on a proven remote supervision dental hygienist model, integrating oral health referral and care coordination into services such as the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) and home visiting, collaborating through a project advisory board with key partners and local stakeholders to maximize reach and effectiveness, and training oral health professionals and non-oral-health professionals in the importance of oral health care during pregnancy and infancy. The program will be integrated into public health efforts to maximize access to services, scalability, and care coordination.

- *Wisconsin:* Healthy Smiles for Mom and Baby (HSMB), part of the Children’s Health Alliance of Wisconsin, a program of Children’s Hospital of Wisconsin, will work to reduce the prevalence of oral disease in pregnant women and infants most at risk by improving access to high-quality oral health care. In particular, the project aims to increase infants’ and women’s use of oral health services during the perinatal period by integrating oral health into health-care-delivery systems statewide. The project will build infrastructure, increase prevention and health-promotion activities, expand access, and educate the health care work force.

To support the PIOHQI pilot and expansion grant projects, MCHB funded the PIOHQI [National Learning Network](#) (2014–2017) to enable peer-to-peer learning, strengthen state leadership, and build data capacity to improve the perinatal systems of health care that include oral health. The network will capture information about the collaborative process among key state partners to achieve quality improvement in the state and local health care system(s) that



serve pregnant women and infants. The network will coordinate the development and testing of an evidence-informed strategic framework to inform statewide health care systems transformation. The knowledge gained will guide systems change to more efficiently and effectively respond to the oral health needs of pregnant women and infants most at risk for oral disease.

In addition to the nationally funded initiative, several states have coordinated activities to promote oral health for pregnant women. For example:

- *Minnesota:* Children's Dental Services (CDS) provides oral health outreach, education, and treatment to infants, children, adolescents, and young adults from birth to age 26 as well as to pregnant women across the state. Staff are well equipped to serve families from culturally diverse backgrounds. Most CDS staff members themselves are bi- or multilingual, together speaking numerous languages, including American Sign Language, Cambodian, Dingo, Farsi, French, Hindi, Hmong, Karen, Korean, Russian, Serbo-Croatian, Somali, Spanish, Swahili, Ukrainian, Urdu, and Vietnamese. CDS accepts all insurance and offers a sliding scale for families who are income-eligible.
- *Virginia:* In summer 2015, Jenna Linden, a dental hygienist and community dental health coordinator, conducted a short-term demonstration project at Eastern Shore Rural Health System on Virginia's Eastern Shore. The goal of the project was to increase access to oral health care through community education and outreach, targeting population groups such as pregnant women and young children. Ms. Linden coordinated with local health professionals and community organizations to connect pregnant women with oral health care and increase awareness of Virginia's recent Medicaid expansion, which includes oral health care for pregnant women during pregnancy and for 60 days following birth. Before the demonstration project began, few pregnant women in the community knew they had the option to receive dental benefits during their pregnancy or of the connections between oral health and overall health during pregnancy. Efforts to decrease barriers to care allowed for implementation and expansion of oral-health-education outreach efforts and increased access to oral health care for both pregnant women and their children.
- *Washington:* The Washington Dental Service Foundation is working to ensure that oral health screenings and educational messages are core parts of prenatal health visits and that pregnant women receive oral health care, including treatment in dental offices. Currently the foundation is partnering with three medical practices in Washington to integrate oral health screenings and risk assessments, tips to improve oral health, fluoride varnish applications as necessary, and referrals for oral health care into prenatal visits. The foundation also partnered with the University of Washington School of Dentistry to develop and disseminate a continuing education course for dentists and other oral health professionals that teaches them to deliver evidence-based care to pregnant women. In addition, the foundation works with community-based organizations such as Head Start, WIC, and home visiting programs to educate pregnant women about the safety and importance of oral health care during pregnancy and to help them access oral health care, including treatment.



## Resources

- *During Pregnancy, the Mouth Matters: A Guide to Michigan Perinatal Oral Health*

This guide provides information about infant mortality and perinatal oral health in Michigan. It offers guidance on oral health for perinatal care health professionals and oral health professionals to help pregnant women achieve or maintain good oral health, presents a visual guide to common oral conditions, and provides referral resources in Michigan to help ensure that pregnant women in the state have access to oral health care. The guide was produced by the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services.

- *Get the Facts About Oral Health*

This infographic presents information about the oral health of pregnant women, infants, and young children. Topics include the safety of oral health care and treatment during pregnancy, visiting the dentist, taking care of infant teeth, toothbrushing with fluoridated toothpaste, preventing tooth decay and gum disease, and drinking fluoridated water. It is available in English and Spanish. The infographic was produced by the National Center on Health.

- *Healthy Habits for Happy Smiles*

This series of handouts for pregnant women and parents of infants and young children provides simple

tips on oral health issues. Topics include taking care of pregnant women's oral health, managing teething pain, taking care of infants' oral health, brushing children's teeth, toothbrushing positions and tips for brushing the teeth of children with special health care needs, choosing healthy drinks, giving healthy snacks, getting fluoride, preventing oral injuries, and finding a dental clinic. The series is available in English and Spanish. The handouts were produced by the National Center on Health.

- *Less Than Optimal Oral Health Care During Pregnancy in Rhode Island Women: Oral Health Care as a Part of Prenatal Care*

This report provides an assessment of oral health care access and use among pregnant women in Rhode Island. Contents include estimates of women who received care during their pregnancy, the prevalence of education provision for women in the prenatal care period, and how to ensure that all women obtain appropriate care and education during the prenatal period. The report was produced by the Rhode Island Department of Health.

- *PRAMStat*

This data platform provides access to maternal and child health indicators from the Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System (PRAMS). Data can be viewed for a single state or across states. Topics



### Sugeresiones para una buena salud bucal durante el embarazo

**A**ntes de comenzar cualquier sugerencia para el cuidado de su salud bucal durante el embarazo, asegúrese de haber consultado con su médico. Los cambios que experimenta en su cuerpo durante el embarazo pueden afectar la salud de su boca y su capacidad para combatir las infecciones. El cuidado de su salud bucal durante el embarazo es importante para su salud y la de su bebé. Los problemas de salud bucal durante el embarazo pueden afectar a usted y a su bebé.

**Consulte atención bucal**

- El embarazo puede tener un efecto en su salud bucal. Antes de comenzar cualquier sugerencia para el cuidado de su salud bucal durante el embarazo, asegúrese de haber consultado con su médico. Los cambios que experimenta en su cuerpo durante el embarazo pueden afectar la salud de su boca y su capacidad para combatir las infecciones. El cuidado de su salud bucal durante el embarazo es importante para su salud y la de su bebé. Los problemas de salud bucal durante el embarazo pueden afectar a usted y a su bebé.

**Consume alimentos saludables**

- Consume una variedad de alimentos saludables como frutas, verduras, productos lácteos como leche, queso y yogur, y granos como arroz, trigo y maíz.

**Evita el tabaco y el alcohol**

- Evita el tabaco y el alcohol durante el embarazo. El tabaco y el alcohol pueden afectar la salud de su boca y su capacidad para combatir las infecciones. El cuidado de su salud bucal durante el embarazo es importante para su salud y la de su bebé. Los problemas de salud bucal durante el embarazo pueden afectar a usted y a su bebé.

Spanish

## Tips for Good Oral Health During Pregnancy

### 怀孕期间口腔保健建议

**下**列是怀孕期间口腔保健的一些建议。在怀孕期间，您的身体会发生许多变化，这些变化可能会影响您的口腔健康。因此，在怀孕期间保持口腔健康非常重要。请咨询您的牙医，以获得个性化的建议。

**进行口腔检查**

- 怀孕期间应定期进行口腔检查。请咨询您的牙医，以获得个性化的建议。

**保持口腔卫生**

- 每天刷牙两次，每次至少两分钟。使用含氟牙膏。
- 每天使用牙线。
- 避免含糖饮料和零食。
- 避免吸烟和饮酒。

**饮食建议**

- 均衡饮食，包括水果、蔬菜、全谷物、蛋白质和乳制品。
- 避免含糖饮料和零食。
- 避免吸烟和饮酒。

**避免使用烟草和酒精**

- 避免使用烟草和酒精。它们会对您的口腔健康和胎儿的健康产生负面影响。

Chinese

### Lời khuyên để có sức khỏe răng miệng tốt trong thai kỳ

**D**ưới đây là lời khuyên giúp bạn chăm sóc sức khỏe răng miệng trong thai kỳ. Trong thai kỳ, cơ thể bạn sẽ trải qua nhiều thay đổi, những thay đổi này có thể ảnh hưởng đến sức khỏe răng miệng của bạn. Vì vậy, việc chăm sóc răng miệng trong thai kỳ là rất quan trọng. Hãy tham khảo ý kiến của bác sĩ nha khoa để được tư vấn chi tiết.

**Khám sức khỏe răng miệng**

- Khám sức khỏe răng miệng định kỳ trong thai kỳ. Hãy tham khảo ý kiến của bác sĩ nha khoa để được tư vấn chi tiết.

**Thực hành giữ gìn vệ sinh răng miệng tốt**

- Đánh răng ít nhất hai lần mỗi ngày, mỗi lần ít nhất hai phút. Sử dụng kem đánh răng có chứa fluor.
- Dùng chỉ nha khoa hàng ngày.
- Tránh đồ uống có đường và đồ ăn vặt.
- Tránh hút thuốc và uống rượu.

**Ăn thực phẩm có lợi cho sức khỏe**

- Ăn thực phẩm đa dạng bao gồm trái cây, rau, ngũ cốc nguyên hạt, protein và sữa.
- Tránh đồ uống có đường và đồ ăn vặt.
- Tránh hút thuốc và uống rượu.

Vietnamese

### Полезная информация о здоровой полости рта во время беременности

**В**ажно получить информацию о состоянии полости рта во время беременности. Во время беременности организм претерпевает многие изменения, которые могут повлиять на здоровье полости рта. Поэтому уход за полостью рта во время беременности является очень важным. Обратитесь к стоматологу для получения индивидуальных рекомендаций.

**Здоровье полости рта**

- Регулярно посещайте стоматолога во время беременности. Обратитесь к стоматологу для получения индивидуальных рекомендаций.

**Практикуйте хорошую гигиену полости рта**

- Чистите зубы не менее двух раз в день, по крайней мере по две минуты. Используйте зубную пасту с фтором.
- Пользуйтесь зубной нитью каждый день.
- Избегайте сладких напитков и перекусов.
- Избегайте курения и употребления алкоголя.

**Питайтесь здоровой пищей**

- Ешьте разнообразную пищу, включая фрукты, овощи, цельнозерновые продукты, белок и молочные продукты.
- Избегайте сладких напитков и перекусов.
- Избегайте курения и употребления алкоголя.

Russian

include delivery, demographics, infant health, maternal behavior/health, maternal experiences, prenatal care, and insurance. The data platform is managed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion.

- **Smiles for Life: A National Oral Health Curriculum**  
This curriculum comprises eight modules addressing oral health for children, adults, pregnant women, and older adults. All eight modules offer dental continuing education credits. A free companion reference app with a decision tool, interactive caries-risk-assessment tool, and photo gallery is available for iOS/Android platforms. Module 5, Oral Health for Women: Pregnancy and Across the Lifespan, addresses the importance of oral health before, during, and after pregnancy and the prevalence of oral disease during pregnancy and its consequences for both mothers and children. The module also reviews dental treatment guidelines for pregnant women. All modules include presenter notes, companion videos, implementation guides, educational objectives, test questions, and resources. The curriculum was produced by the Society of Teachers of Family Medicine.

The *Smiles for Life* curriculum resources section includes a prenatal care intended for use in a small group or classroom setting using a patient approach with an interprofessional-education focus. The learner version contains proposed questions that can be completed in advance. The moderator version contains case-specific questions, potential responses, and background material. Educators can modify the case to specific learner needs and settings.

- **Tips for Good Oral Health During Pregnancy**  
This tip sheet provides information and resources to help women take care of their oral health during pregnancy. Topics include getting oral health care, practicing good oral hygiene, eating healthy foods, and practicing other healthy behaviors. The tip sheet also encourages women to take care of their infant's gums and teeth, ask their pediatric health professional to check their infant's mouth starting at age 6 months, and provide a referral to a dentist for urgent care. The tip sheet is available in English and several other languages (Chinese, Russian, Spanish, Vietnamese; pictured above). The tip sheet was produced by the National Maternal and Child Oral Health Resource Center.

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