

# Promoting Oral Health During Pregnancy: Update on Activities

June 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 second in a series of updates to highlight national, state, and local activities to promote oral health during pregnancy.

## Programs and Policy

In 2013, the Health Resources and Services Administration's Maternal and Child Health Bureau launched the *Perinatal and Infant Oral Health Quality Improvement* (PIOHQI) national initiative. The goal of the initiative is to reduce the prevalence of oral disease in

pregnant women and infants through improved access to quality oral health care (i.e., preventive services, restorative treatment, education) and increased utilization of oral health services.

The first phase of the PIOHQI initiative includes a *pilot grant program* (2013–2017), which provides support to three projects. Below is a short description of each project:

- *Connecticut*: The Connecticut Department of Social Services' PIOHQI Intensive Community Outreach (ICO) project is expanding its existing oral health activities to address the comprehensive oral health needs of pregnant women and infants at high risk for oral health problems and to promote an environment that supports perinatal and infant/toddler oral health. The project is working to eliminate oral health barriers and disparities, improve the oral health care system in Connecticut through ongoing evaluation, and leverage available resources to maintain the ICO approach and evaluate its effectiveness. One aspect of the project is using a trusted person



model, which includes a “warm hand-off” approach to improve oral health care utilization.

- *New York:* The New York State Department of Health’s New York State Perinatal and Infant Oral Health Collaborative Initiative aims to improve the oral health of pregnant women and infants through organizational and systems-level changes. The initiative is working to increase the percentage of women who visit a dentist during pregnancy, who receive an assessment for oral health problems and appropriate referral by a prenatal care professional, and who engage in healthy infant feeding and infant oral hygiene practices. A core strategy that the project plans to assess is the use of community health workers.
- *West Virginia:* The West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources’ PIOHQI project is establishing a statewide approach to delivering oral health care to pregnant women with low incomes, increasing the number of children from families with low incomes who have established dental homes, and expanding the West Virginia Oral Health Surveillance System to monitor and evaluate pregnant women’s oral health. One aspect of the project is collaborating with the state’s Healthy Start program to reach pregnant women.

The second phase of the PIOHQI national initiative is an [expansion grant program](#) (2015–2019), which will continue the work of the national initiative. The purpose of the program is to expand the number of targeted demonstrations for replicable integration of quality oral health care (i.e., preventive services, restorative treatment, education) into perinatal and infant primary-care-delivery systems with statewide reach. The project start date for the expansion grantees is August 1, 2015.

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

- *California:* Maternal and Child Health Access, with funding provided by First 5 LA, spearheaded the [Oral Health Advocacy for Pregnant Women and Children](#) project. In April 2014, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services approved the California Department of Health Care Services state plan amendment 13-018 that restores certain adult dental benefits for persons 21 years of age or older under the Medi-Cal program. Effective May 1, 2014, women with pregnancy-only Medi-Cal are included in the partial restoration of adult dental benefits.



- *Missouri:* In 2014, the Missouri Dental Association, in conjunction with the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services, began distributing information about [Healthy Smiles from the Start](#), a multifaceted prenatal and postnatal oral-health-education program for mothers and other caregivers of newborns. Healthy Smiles from the Start, which was launched by the Alliance of the American Dental Association, the American Dental Association, and Henry Schein Cares, addresses oral health issues during pregnancy and throughout early childhood.
- *North Carolina:* In 2013, the University of North Carolina’s School of Dentistry’s Department of Pediatric Dentistry and School of Medicine’s Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology launched a [prenatal oral health training program](#). The program is designed to educate primary care health professionals and oral health professionals about the principals of oral health during pregnancy, specifics about oral health treatment during pregnancy, and guidelines for implementing the prenatal oral health program principles in prenatal care and oral health care settings.

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## Resources

- *2014 Perinatal Care Recommendations*

This document provides a core set of perinatal clinical care guidelines for average-risk individuals from the general population. Contents include guidelines for the first prenatal visit (6 to 12 weeks), subsequent prenatal visits (13 to 35 weeks and 36 to 42 weeks), and the postpartum visit. Topics include initial and interval history; psychosocial assessment; physical examination; immunizations; laboratory evaluation and additional testing; oral health; genetic counseling, screening, and testing; general counseling, education, and discussion; and the postpartum visit. The document was produced by Massachusetts Healthy Quality Partners.

- *Dental Benefits for Pregnant Women Enrolled in Medicaid and FAMIS MOMS*

This fact sheet describes the benefits of providing oral health care for pregnant women eligible for Medicaid and FAMIS MOMS, a program that offers health care coverage for women in Virginia who are pregnant. Topics include how dental coverage can improve safety net sustainability and reduce costly emergency department visits, how it can reduce the cost of oral health care for children, and how it can reduce the number of infants born preterm and at low birth-weight. The fact sheet was produced by the Virginia Oral Health Coalition.

- *Educate and Advocate: Oral Health During Pregnancy for Low-Income Women in California*

This brief provides information about the Oral Health Advocacy for Pregnant Women and Children project, a collaboration between Maternal and Child Health Access (MCHA) and the Community Clinics Association of Los Angeles County (CCALAC). Topics include the importance of and need for oral health care during pregnancy, changing dental coverage for women with pregnancy-only Medi-Cal, issues pregnant women face related to obtaining oral health care, issues health professionals face related to providing oral health care to pregnant women, the MCHA and CCALAC partnership, and policy recommendations. The brief was produced by MCHA.

- *Healthy Smiles from the Start: Dental Tips for Mom and Baby*

These resources for pregnant women and new mothers describe oral health issues that may arise during pregnancy and throughout early childhood and how and why to make healthy habits a priority for everyone in the family. Topics include oral hygiene and oral health care for pregnant women and infants, thumb-sucking and pacifiers, teething, and nutrition. Contents include a video, a brochure, a flyer, and a quiz. The resources are available in English and Spanish. These resources were produced by the Alliance of the American Dental Association.



- *Oral Health for Pregnant Women and Children*  
This brief presents information about oral health for pregnant women and children. The brief discusses the public health issue, the magnitude and trends, national and state goals, state programs and initiatives, public health strategies and practices, and capacity of the Florida Department of Health. The brief was produced by the Florida Department of Health, Maternal and Child Health Section.
- *Oral Health Matters: Oral Health During Pregnancy*  
This fact sheet for pregnant women provides information about oral health during pregnancy and includes tips for good oral health care. The fact sheet also discusses the importance of primary teeth in infants and young children, finding a dentist, and scheduling dental visits. The content appears in English on one side and in Spanish on the other side. The fact sheet was produced by the Virginia Oral Health Coalition.
- *Smile Wide*  
This blog posts information related to oral health and includes several postings on oral health care during pregnancy: (1) *Expecting? Then Expect to Visit the Dentist*, (2) *Keep Your Smile Healthy During Pregnancy*, and (3) *Turn Pregnancy Symptoms into a Smile*. The blog is produced by Delta Dental of Washington.
- *TeethFIRST!*  
This website provides information for pregnant women about how the mouth changes during pregnancy, steps to ensure that the mouth is healthy before a woman becomes pregnant, and what to do to keep teeth strong during pregnancy. The website is produced by TeethFirst!, a collaboration of organizations.
- *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 Spanish. The tip sheet was produced by the National Maternal and Child Oral Health Resource Center.

- *Tooth Talk*  
These videos for Head Start staff and other child care and early education professionals address oral health care for pregnant women, infants, and young children. Topics include the importance of oral health care, toothbrushing, weaning from a bottle, and motivational interviewing. Many of the videos are appropriate for sharing with parents. The videos were produced by the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Gillings School of Global Public Health and the North Carolina Division of Public Health, Oral Health Section.

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