



NEWS RELEASE
For Immediate Release

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May is Pregnancy Awareness Month: Don't overlook importance of dentist visits and oral health

Johnston, IA. (April 25, 2011) – Most pregnant women recognize how important their health is for their baby's health, but may ignore a critical component – their oral health. If you are pregnant or planning to become pregnant, here are some tips to maintain your smile during your pregnancy.

“Women who are pregnant should schedule a dental checkup and cleaning within the first trimester of their pregnancy,” said Dr. Ed Schooley, dental director for Delta Dental of Iowa. “Your dentist can identify and treat gum and teeth problems, lowering the risk for more serious, ongoing health problems for both you and your baby.”

According to the American Academy of Periodontology, 50 percent or more of women get “pregnancy gingivitis,” a disease that makes gums sore and swollen. In some scientific studies, pregnant women with gum disease have given birth to low-weight or pre-term babies, who are at risk for many serious diseases.

Pregnant women with untreated cavities can transmit bacteria to their newborn baby, increasing the child's risk for early oral disease. Other oral infections can also present risks to an expectant mother's overall health, leading to other medical problems during pregnancy.

In addition to visiting the dentist, pregnant women can take these steps to prevent oral health complications:

- Brush teeth twice daily with a fluoride toothpaste and floss daily.
- Limit foods containing sugar to mealtimes only.
- Choose water or low-fat milk as a beverage and avoid carbonated beverages.
- Choose fruit rather than fruit juice to meet the recommended daily fruit intake.

Building an Oral Health Foundation

The American Academy of Family Physicians recommends that care for a child's gums begin at birth. Caregivers should gently wipe the baby's gums with a soft, wet cloth after each feeding. When primary teeth begin to appear, teeth should be cleaned with a soft, child-sized toothbrush twice a day. Toothpaste with fluoride can be introduced once your child is able to spit, usually around 18 to 24 months.

“Many new moms don't realize how important it is to start early when taking care of their baby's oral health,” said Schooley. “There's a continuing need for more education to teach parents best practices that will ensure lifelong oral health.”

In February, the Delta Dental of Iowa Foundation launched “Dentist by 1,” a statewide public service campaign to educate parents about the benefits of taking their children to the dentist by age 1. As part of the campaign, the Delta Dental of Iowa Foundation is offering a free infant toothbrush* for children up to age 3 who have visited the dentist. To sign up for a toothbrush and learn more about taking care of your oral health during pregnancy and providing your baby with a lifetime of good oral health, visit www.OralHealthIA.com.

Delta Dental of Iowa is the largest and most experienced provider of dental benefits in the state. As a not-for-profit, Delta Dental of Iowa invests in oral health projects through the Delta Dental of Iowa Foundation that focus on access to care, prevention, education and research. Delta Dental of Iowa is a member of the Delta Dental Plans Association, a national organization of not-for-profit Delta Dental member companies. The national association is the largest dental benefits carrier in the nation providing coverage to 54 million people in more than 93,600 employer groups.

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* Infant toothbrushes will be given to the first 10,000 people who complete the form on the Delta Dental of Iowa website at www.OralHealthIA.com.