

Healthier gums may lead to healthier babies

Research has linked periodontal (gum) disease to pre-term birth and low birth-weight babies

At CIGNA, we have learned that with preventive care, many of the complications and costs associated with an unhealthy birth can be reduced - and a lot of pain and suffering can be avoided. We know the best birth outcomes don't start in the delivery room. They are the product of planning, education, a healthy pregnancy and good medical and dental care.

Unfortunately, more than 500,000 babies in the United States are born prematurely, before the 37th completed week. This means that **one in eight babies** is born too early (12.8 percent of all live births¹). It takes a tremendous toll on families as premature babies fight to survive and may have ongoing health challenges throughout their lives.

Studies show that:

- Women with periodontal disease may have an increased risk for pre-term, low birth weight deliveries.
- Pregnant women with chronic gum disease during the second trimester are up to **seven times** more likely to give birth prematurely.²
- Changes in estrogen and progesterone levels due to pregnancy multiply a woman's potential to develop gum disease.³ This phenomenon, known as "pregnancy gingivitis," occurs frequently in pregnant women.
- Data suggests that each year, periodontal disease may be causing as many as 1.8% of preterm births and low birth-weight deliveries.⁴

If you are pregnant, you are urged to:

- Increase your personal oral hygiene efforts and seek regular professional dental care.
- Keep all scheduled dental appointments and follow a regular treatment plan.
- Notify your dentist if you are taking any medications, or have noticed any inflammation, loose teeth or swelling, redness or bleeding of your gums.
- At every appointment, tell your dentist how far along you are in your pregnancy (the number of weeks).

Take care of your teeth and gums,
and they can help take care of your unborn baby.



Good dental care may be linked with a decreased risk of pre-term birth.

Researchers found as much as an 87% reduction of premature births in women who were treated for gum disease.⁵

- More than half of all adults have the early stages of gum disease.
- Gum disease may be painless, but may include symptoms such as swollen, tender or bleeding gums.
- Gum disease is preventable and treatable. It's important to visit your dentist on a regular basis.



¹ March of Dimes, 2011 ^{2,3} American Academy of Periodontology, 2011 ⁴ National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research ⁵ August 2008, Journal of Periodontology. "CIGNA Dental" refers to the following operating subsidiaries of CIGNA Corporation: **Connecticut General Life Insurance Company**, and CIGNA Dental Health, Inc. and its operating subsidiaries and affiliates. This document is provided by CIGNA solely for informational purposes to promote consumer health. It does not constitute medical advice and is not intended to be a substitute for proper dental care provided by a dentist. CIGNA assumes no responsibility for any circumstances arising out of the use, misuse, interpretation or application of any information supplied in this document. Always consult with your doctor for appropriate examinations, treatment, testing, and care recommendations. 03/11 ©2011 CIGNA

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