

Improving Perinatal and Infant Oral Health Project

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When providing oral health care to the general population, two groups that are often overlooked are pregnant women and infants. This occurs despite our knowing that these stages are critical times for achieving good oral health, which contribute, in turn, to overall health and well being. In response to this, the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry in collaboration with Children's Dental Health Project (<http://www.cdhp.org>) is executing a five-year grant project funded by the federal Maternal and Child Health Bureau. The Improving Perinatal and Infant Oral Health Project, which seeks to promote the oral health of pregnant women and infants, and to increase public awareness of the importance of perinatal and infant oral health, is currently in its fourth year of implementation. The project works to improve educational outreach and access to oral health care for pregnant women and infants, to improve the knowledge and skills of providers who see them, and to increase awareness of the importance of perinatal and infant oral health among diverse stakeholders: clinical, public, policy-related, and others. Primary activities include providing education to pregnant women and providers on the importance of accessing care during the perinatal period, promoting the AAPD age one and dental home policies, and developing nontraditional partnerships to promote oral health.

A focus of the Project is to enhance maternal and child oral health programming across the country at the local, state, and national levels. Specifically the project addresses the need to contribute to dental providers' knowledge, skills and practices regarding perinatal and infant oral health issues. AAPD works collaboratively with MCHB grantees that are members of the Alliance for Information on Maternal and Child Health (AIM). Through AIM partners, AAPD is has created new, nontraditional partnerships with organizations representing business, government, direct service providers and philanthropy, and has disseminated oral health concepts and guidelines to a larger group of maternal and child health providers.

As part of our efforts to provide relevant information to the AAPD membership, the Ad Hoc Committee on Perinatal and Infant Oral Health will provide a series of articles in the next several editions of *Pediatric Dentistry Today*. Committee members will address relevant clinical subjects such as:

- parental education on vertical transmission
- incorporating age one visits into private practice
- guidance on prenatal care
- promoting cultural competency

As we know, the oral health of pregnant women is critical to overall health and wellbeing, and possibly associated to birth outcomes. One topic we are proud to bring you in our upcoming series is an article regarding the abridged version of the New York Oral Health Care During Pregnancy and Early Childhood Practice Guidelines. As the only state-level guidelines for practitioners, dental and non-dental, they are used widely in many other states as well. The Project has worked with the New York State Department of Health to facilitate an abridged, user-friendly version of this document that will greatly enhance the ease with which pediatric dentists and other providers can serve and refer these patients. These guidelines will also complement the Guideline on Perinatal and Infant Oral Health currently under development by the Council on Clinical Affairs. Look for more information on this and the above topics in upcoming editions of *PDT*.

For more information on the project or to become involved, please contact Chair of the Ad Hoc Committee on Perinatal Oral Health Dr. Ned Savide at NL.Savide@aol.com or Project Manager Jessie Buerlein at jbuerlein@cdhp.org. **PDT**

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