



NEWS RELEASE
For Immediate Release

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May is Pregnancy Awareness Month: Coloradoans overlook importance of dentist visits, oral health

DENVER, Colo. (April 26, 2010) – Most pregnant women recognize how important their health is for their baby’s health, but may ignore a critical component – their oral health. In fact, over a quarter of Coloradoan mothers neglected to visit a dentist during pregnancy,¹ which is key to helping prevent harmful oral and overall health problems for themselves and their child.

“Women who are pregnant should schedule a dental checkup and cleaning within the first trimester of their pregnancy,” said Dr. Fiona Collins, dental director for Delta Dental of Colorado. “Dentists can identify and treat gum and teeth problems, lowering the risk for more serious, ongoing health problems for both a mother and her baby.”

According to the American Academy of Periodontology, about 50 percent of women get “pregnancy gingivitis,” a disease that makes gums sore and swollen. In some 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. Oral infections can also present risks to an expectant mother’s overall health, leading to other medical problems during pregnancy.

Along with 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.

Oral Health Care Begins at Birth

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. Unfortunately, 42 percent of Colorado caregivers clean their baby's gums just a few times a week, or less, according to a recent survey by Delta Dental of Colorado.¹

Also, only 39 percent surveyed strongly agree that caregivers can pass dental disease to their child by sharing items such as spoons or straws, or by cleaning a pacifier in their own mouth and giving it to the baby. Rather, caregivers should wash the pacifier with soap and water, rinse, and then return to the baby.

“Many Coloradoans don't understand how important it is to take care of their baby's oral health,” said Collins. “There's a continuing need for more education to teach practices that will ensure lifelong oral health. And, since people overwhelmingly prefer the dentist as their primary oral health information source, dental benefits that encourage visits to the dentist are crucial.”

Delta Dental of Colorado is the largest and most experienced provider of dental benefits in the state. As a not-for-profit, Delta Dental of Colorado invests in oral health projects through the Delta Dental of Colorado Foundation that focus on access to care, prevention, education and research. The Colorado company is a member of the Delta Dental Plans Association, a national organization of not-for-profit Delta Dental plans. The national association is the largest dental benefits carrier in the nation providing coverage to more than 54 million people in nearly 89,000 employer groups.

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¹ *Morpace Inc. conducted the 2009 Delta Dental of Colorado Children's Oral Health Survey. Random 15-minute telephone interviews were conducted statewide with 151 primary caregivers of children from birth to age 11. For results based on the total sample of Colorado adults, the margin of error is ±3.2 percentage points at a 95 percent confidence level.*