

Caring for Your Pregnant Patients

Maternal Health

Maternal mortality rates are rising in the U.S.¹ Poor oral health increases a pregnant woman's risk of high blood pressure, a precursor to preeclampsia, which can lead to major complications, even death. Fortunately, with proactive, preventive medical and dental care, the risk of maternal mortality decreases.

What to ask your patients if they're expecting

1. Have you received prenatal care?
2. What is your expected delivery date?
3. Is this a high-risk pregnancy? If so, are there any special concerns or contraindications?
4. Have you had any previous complications with prior pregnancies?

What to look for during the examination

Symptoms	What they may mean
Elevated blood pressure (over 140/90)	Preeclampsia or pregnancy-induced hypertension
Significant swelling in hands, face or around the eyes	Preeclampsia
Dry mouth	Dehydration or gestational diabetes
Dental erosions	Excessive vomiting secondary to morning sickness or pregnancy-induced gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD)
Increased thirst	Gestational diabetes
Complaints of difficulty sleeping, increased irritability or feelings of hopelessness	Perinatal depression
Fever	Infection, flu

Clinical tips⁴

- Antibiotics considered safe for pregnant patients include penicillin, amoxicillin, cephalosporins, clindamycin and metronidazole.
- Nitrous oxide is classified as a pregnancy risk group Category C medication and should be avoided. There's a risk of fetal harm if administered during pregnancy.
- Radiographs are considered safe at any stage of pregnancy when abdominal and thyroid shielding is used.

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2022, Feb. 23). "Maternal Mortality Rates in the United States, 2020." cdc.gov.

² Muñoz Aguilera, Eva, et al. (2021, March 21) "Association Between Periodontitis and Blood Pressure Highlighted in Systemically Healthy Individuals." AHA Journals: Hypertension. ahajournals.org.

³ Eberhard, Jörg, et al. (2021, Dec. 7). "Does Treatment of Gingivitis During Pregnancy Improve Pregnancy Outcomes? A System Review and Meta-analysis." Journal of Oral Health and Preventive Dentistry. Accessed Jan. 2022. quintessence-publishing.com.

⁴ American Dental Association (2021, May 4). "Pregnancy: Key Points" ada.org.

Did you know?

- Patients with periodontitis often present with higher arterial blood pressure and a 30%-70% higher rate of hypertension, especially when there is active gingival inflammation.²
- 50%-75% of pregnant women develop gingivitis during pregnancy, which increases the risk for pre-term delivery, late-term miscarriages and pre-eclampsia.³
- Treating gum inflammation during pregnancy can reduce the risk of a baby being born preterm by 50%.³

Questions?

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