



California Department of Public Health  
**OFFICE OF ORAL HEALTH**

## **ORAL HEALTH BYTES**

### **A Newsletter For**

### **Local Oral Health Programs**



### **Pregnancy and Oral Health**

Pregnancy can bring up a myriad of thoughts, feelings, and physical changes in the body. Pregnant people may be more prone to gum disease and cavities and be more likely to develop gingivitis. Gingivitis is an early stage of periodontal disease that occurs when the gums become red and swollen from inflammation that could be aggravated by changing hormones in pregnancy. Research suggests that the bacteria that cause inflammation in the gums can actually get into the bloodstream, potentially leading to premature labor and low- birthweight (PLBW) babies<sup>1</sup>. It is important that pregnant people take care of their teeth and gums. It is safe to receive oral health care throughout one's pregnancy, including x-rays and local anesthesia. Routine oral health care, such as visiting a dentist, brushing twice a day with fluoride toothpaste, flossing, drinking water and eating healthy foods will help both the parent and baby be healthy. A new parent can pass bacteria that causes tooth decay on to their child. Early education is key to helping our communities become healthier

and cavity free! This newsletter provides Local Oral Health Programs with a plethora of resources available for pregnant people.

Resource:

1. Ye, C., Kapila, Y. (2021). Oral microbiome shifts during pregnancy and adverse pregnancy outcomes: Hormonal and Immunologic changes at play. *Periodontology 2000*. 2021;87:276–281.



**Tip to Share:** If a pregnant person vomits from morning sickness, they should rinse their mouth and wait thirty minutes before brushing because vomit softens the outer layer (enamel) of the teeth.



**Progress Report** due July 31, 2023, for progress reporting period:  
January 1, 2023 - June 30, 2023

**Data Form** due July 31, 2023, for FY data period July 1, 2022- June 30, 2023

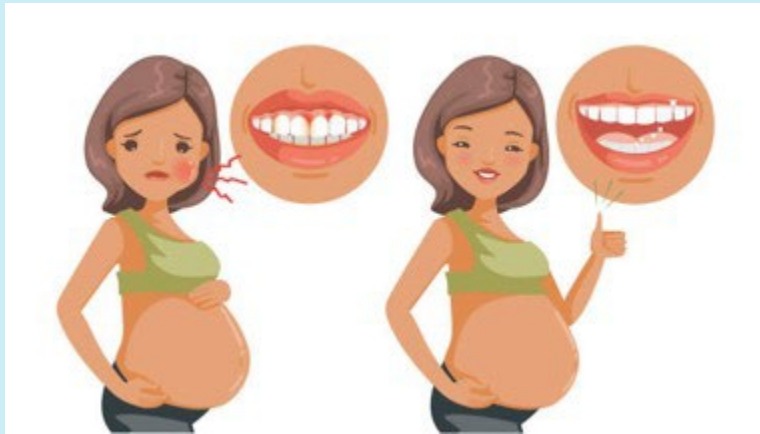
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## Resources



- Use the [Oral Health Care During Pregnancy Guide](#) and [Promoting Oral Health During Pregnancy](#) to provide pregnant people in your communities with the care that they deserve.
- Print these [Tips for Good Oral Health During Pregnancy](#) for families and share this [Pregnancy and Newborn Oral Health Video](#)
- Check out the [California Dental Association \(CDA\) Pregnancy and Oral Health Fact Sheets](#) available in six languages!
- Watch the webinar: [Dental Care During Pregnancy: Increasing Utilization for Improved Patient Health Outcomes](#) Use Passcode: &?R3\*a&0
- Refer to *Pregnancy and Oral Health* resources from the [Center for Disease Control \(CDC\)](#)

- Learn about [Using Teledentistry to Improve Prenatal Care](#) Produced by the National Network for Oral Health Access
- [Oral Health Campaign Toolkit \(aap.org\)](#) This toolkit makes it easier than ever to help connect new parents and families to the oral health answers they need.
- [Webinar Link](#) on the Importance of Oral Health Care During Pregnancy and the Integration into Prenatal Care Visits



### Resources from the National Maternal and Child Oral Health Resource Center (OHRC)



OHRC's online library contains resources to assist you in providing education and training, developing programs, and staying on top of new developments.

Featured topics include [Oral Health During Pregnancy](#) and [Pregnancy Guidelines](#).

[Considerations for Identifying Pregnancies in Claims Data for Oral Health Care Quality Measurements](#)

[Pharmacological Considerations for Pregnant Women](#)

[Oral Health Risk Assessment Questions to Ask Pregnant Women](#)

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### **Resources from the CareQuest Institute**

[Addressing the Role of Oral Health in Maternal Mortality and Pregnancy Outcomes](#) is a visual report that shows the alarming upward trend of both maternal mortality and preterm birth rates in the US over the last three years. Even more alarming, is that the rates are especially high for people of color, and the connection between oral health and pregnancy outcomes are often overlooked.

[The Role of Medicaid Adult Dental Benefits During Pregnancy and Postpartum](#)

[A Change That Can Help Address the Black Maternal Health Crisis](#)

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## BRAND NEW Medi-Cal Dental Brochure: Healthy Smiles from Pregnancy Through the Toddler Years

Pregnancy can be an exciting yet busy time so it's important to remind new parents about oral health. Visiting the dentist during pregnancy for regular cleanings and exams and practicing good daily oral hygiene are some of the most important things expecting parents can do to keep themselves and their baby healthy.

Once the baby is born, it is important to help children establish good oral health habits, like visiting the dentist regularly to reduce dental problems. Many parents and guardians are not aware that their Medi-Cal benefits include dental coverage that allows children up to the age of 21, to have two (sometimes more) regular dental check-ups per year.

In collaboration with First 5 California, Smile, California created a new tri-fold brochure to help inform and provide new parents with tips to keep themselves and their children's mouths healthy. The brochure also includes information about the Medi-Cal Dental Program and how to find a dentist. View, download, and share the new brochure in multiple languages by clicking on the links below.

[English](#) | [Spanish](#) | [Chinese](#) | [Vietnamese](#) | [Korean](#)



*Smile, California* is pleased to offer LOHPs co-branding opportunities at no cost. The co-branded materials will display your organization's logo next to the *Smile, California*, and DHCS logos. **If you**

are interested in co-branding this new brochure or would like printed samples, please send an email to [hello@smilecalifornia.org](mailto:hello@smilecalifornia.org) with your LOHP high-resolution logo and what languages you would like the final digital files to be in.

Visit [SmileCalifornia.org/Pregnancy-Toolkit](https://SmileCalifornia.org/Pregnancy-Toolkit) to access additional Medi-Cal Dental materials for pregnant individuals including, a flyer, brochure, video, and PowerPoint presentation.

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## COHTAC Pregnancy-Related Oral Health Resources



Dental care during pregnancy is not only a vital component of prenatal care, but it also protects the oral health of mothers and their infants. It is widely recognized by multiple health authorities including the [American Dental Association](#) and the [American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists](#) that most dental procedures are safe during pregnancy and that dental care throughout pregnancy is recommended. This is due to increased risks for oral health conditions during pregnancy. This is due to increased risks for oral health conditions during pregnancy.

Dental provider uncertainty and hesitancy, however, persist. To support current clinical guidelines, the California Dental Association recently released [an article reiterating clearance from a prenatal health care provider is not necessary](#) prior to dental treatments. As public health professionals, we should strongly and continuously encourage and support oral health care during pregnancy.

COHTAC offers pregnancy-related resources on our [website](#) that can be accessed in two different ways:

1. [Oral Health Education Resources](#) contains flyers and videos for oral health benefits and establishing good oral health habits during pregnancy.
2. Our [Resource Center](#) includes a host of pregnancy-related resources, including best practices for pregnant people.

*This COHTAC newsletter was written in collaboration between the COHTAC team and current dental public health resident Christine Hao, DMD, MPH.*

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UCSF's [Dental Public Health Residency Program](#) is the only such program in California, training the next generation of public health dentists. Residents partner with Local Oral Health Programs and community clinics to gain on-the-ground experience in designing and supporting dental public health programs. This year, two UCSF Dental Public Health residents conducted their community-based projects to improve access to dental care during pregnancy.

### **Obstetrics-Dental Integration at Petaluma Health Center**

*Christine Hao, DMD, MPH*, conducted her project at Petaluma Health Center to increase the percentage of pregnant patients who have at least one dental visit before delivery from 63% to 70%. Her work resulted in increasing the monthly percentage of new obstetrics (OB) patients with dental visits, the percentage of completed OB-dental visits, and the number of new OB-dental visits scheduled through outreach efforts. The target percentage was met, indicating success in initiating, and establishing the change.



### **Improving Oral Health in Pregnancy**

*Richa Singhanian, BDS, MSPP*, spearheaded her project at La Clínica de la Raza, Monument Clinic, to integrate oral and primary care for pregnant patients to improve oral health during pregnancy. Her training to medical providers and primary care team yielded positive outcomes as providers recognized the significance of oral health during pregnancy, increased willingness to conduct oral evaluations and enhanced their knowledge of fluoride varnish benefits. Richa successfully raised patients' awareness about the significance and safety of dental health during pregnancy, dispelled common misconceptions, and increased awareness of importance of moms' oral health on children's oral health.







## Staff Spotlight

Pang Vang, MPH is a Program Consultant (PC) for the Local Programs and Statewide Intervention unit who oversees twelve Local Oral Health Programs (LOHPs). Pang has been with the Office of Oral Health for three years. Besides overseeing the LOHPs, Pang works on design projects such as the Newsletter. Another recent project completed was the [Onboarding Guide](#) for Local Oral Health Program staff. At home Pang enjoys spending time outside gardening, hiking, playing tennis, cross stitching, crocheting, playing musical instruments, and most of all spending time with her family and friends.

Being a part of the Office of Oral Health (OOH) team has increased Pang's knowledge of the importance of early prevention of tooth decay starting in pregnancy. Pang has taught her children to take good care of their oral hygiene by brushing two times a day with fluoridated toothpaste, flossing and visiting the dentist. Prior to joining the OOH family, she was fearful of going to the dentist while she was pregnant. Now that she has gained knowledge about how important and safe it is she encourages others to visit the dentist during pregnancy.

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## LOHP Highlight

Modoc County can be found nestled in the far northeast corner of the state. With the county motto of “Where the West Still Lives”, picture a landscape of high desert and rural living. Though the population of the county is small, Public Health serves as a hub for services and resources for the rural citizens. Modoc’s Local Oral Health Program (MCLOHP) started in 2017 and has been serving the community through education, outreach, and dental screenings. Educating and empowering pregnant people and new parents has been an important part of MCLOHP since conception. One of the first partnerships MCLOHP made was with local Early Head Start programs, educating parents on the importance and care of baby teeth, and offering dental screenings and referrals, along with hands on toothbrush instruction. The partnership with Early Head Start led to MCLOHP being involved in local childbirth classes. During the last class of each childbirth series, MCLOHP staff provides an educational session on dental caries and infant oral hygiene care. Most recently the MCLOHP has partnered with a local promotoras to bring oral health education and dental screenings to pregnant and new parents within migrant work centers. MCLOHP works closely with MCAH. The MCLOHP provides resources and educational materials to the public health nurses that run the home visiting programs. Through this effort, the consistent messaging of preventing caries and establishing dental homes takes root throughout the entire health department. Looking ahead MCLOHP plans to utilize Modoc County Public Health’s mobile clinic and local RDHAPs to help bridge the gap in access to dental care.

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Email [DentalDirector@cdph.ca.gov](mailto:DentalDirector@cdph.ca.gov) to suggest future articles and provide feedback.

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1616 Capitol Ave. MS 7218

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