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## **Mom's Oral Health and Gingivitis Affects Baby**

Pregnancy is a time of great hormone change. It is important to brush and floss regularly to prevent dental problems. Many pregnant women develop pregnancy gingivitis (gum disease) when dental plaque builds upon the teeth and irritates the gums. Symptoms include red, inflamed, and bleeding gums.

Pregnancy gingivitis occurs more frequently during pregnancy because the increased level of hormones exaggerates the way gums react to the irritants in plaque. However, it's still plaque – not hormones – that is the major cause of gingivitis.

Research shows that gum disease triggers increased levels of biological fluid that induce labor. Data also shows that mothers who have gum disease during pregnancy have a seven times higher risk of having a premature, low birth weight baby.

Some women will also develop what is known as a pregnancy tumor around the second month of pregnancy and will continue until about the eighth month. Once the woman gives birth and her hormone levels return to normal this condition will reverse and the gums will quickly return to normal.

Any elective dental treatment should be avoided during the first trimester of the pregnancy. If an emergency arises during this time such as an infection, it is important to visit the dentist so that they may treat the infection. The infection could be more harmful to the developing baby than the treatment.

Keeping your teeth clean, especially near the gum line, will help dramatically reduce or even prevent gingivitis during your pregnancy. In addition, substituting sweets with more wholesome foods such as cheese, fresh fruit, or vegetables is better for your teeth.