

## **PREGNANCY AND ORAL HEALTH**

Your teeth and gums are affected by pregnancy, just as any other tissues in your body. But what you may not be aware of is that the health of your gums may also affect the health of your baby-to-be.

### **How does pregnancy affect your teeth and gums?**

About half of women experience pregnancy gingivitis. This condition can be uncomfortable and cause swelling, bleeding, redness or tenderness in the gum tissue. Conversely, a more advanced oral health condition called periodontal disease may affect the health of your unborn child.

### **Is periodontal disease linked to pre-term, low birth weight babies?**

Yes. In fact, pregnant women with periodontal disease may be seven times more likely to have a baby that is born too early and too small. The likely culprit is a labor-inducing chemical found in oral bacteria called prostaglandin. Very high levels of prostaglandin are found in women with severe cases of periodontal disease.

### **How to I minimize “pregnancy gingivitis”?**

- Take extra care and time with good brushing and flossing techniques to remove plaque.
- Have a dental check-up and cleaning within the first or second trimester of your pregnancy. Also, take advantage of your Delta Dental insurance plan that includes a FREE third dental cleaning for women who are in their last trimester of pregnancy.
- Eat a well balanced diet and get plenty of vitamins C and B12. Tobacco users should refrain from using tobacco products during their entire pregnancy.

*Source: The American Academy of Periodontology*