

Dental Disease may be Transmitted by Parents

Research supports the fact that children, more often than not, track the dental condition of their parents this according to the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry. Parents who have good oral hygiene (ie, good brushing, flossing techniques and see their dentist regularly) are more likely to have children with good oral hygiene habits and less dental disease over their lifetime. Recently research confirmed that the primary provider (usually the mother, secondarily the father) transmit dental disease causing bacteria to their children when they are infants. This occurs by tasting foods, kissing, using the same utensils and other close contacts with the infant. It is also believed that the cavity causing bacteria are transmitted during the first 36 months of life. In other words, if the infant is not inoculated in this 36-month window the child seems to be at lower risk during its lifetime to have significant dental disease. Once the infant is inoculated he or she automatically will be high risk for tooth decay and gum disease throughout their life. In short, this means dental disease can be classified as a transmittable disease.

This inoculation of infants is very common but can be prevented if the parent's bacterial count is low. This is accomplished by the parents having good oral hygiene habits, seeing their dentist regularly and not having active gum disease (bleeding gums) or dental decay. Mothers who are pregnant and see their dentist regularly during their pregnancy and after their pregnancy, particularly for the first three years of the child's life and do everything necessary to maintain their oral hygiene are much more likely to have a child less prone to dental disease.

Often during pregnancy, mom omits her routine dental care thinking it is not safe to go to the dentist during her pregnancy, or simply being overwhelmed about the pregnancy and all the preparation

necessary and does not remember to continue routine oral care. Well it is very safe and in fact recommended that pregnant women receive routine dental care during pregnancy and particularly the first three years after the pregnancy in order to maintain good oral hygiene to keep her bacterial count low. All is not lost if the child is inoculated, because dental disease can be prevented even if the child is at higher risk due to the inoculation.

Prevention of decay and gum disease is a matter of learning to properly care for an infant and young child's teeth, this includes proper brushing and flossing techniques, but also includes the proper use of fluoride, understanding how diet can affect oral health, and the proper use of bottles, sippie cups and pacifiers at an early age.

Prevention starts with early intervention your baby should be seen by a pediatric dentist shortly after the first tooth erupts (about 6 months of age), about the time of the first well-baby check-up with a pediatrician. A pediatric dentist will provide guidance and information that will allow you to keep your child free of dental disease and give your child a great start on life as a "no-cavity-kid".

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