

## Healthier gums may lead to healthier babies

# Research has linked periodontal (gum) disease to pre-term birth and low birth-weight babies

**At CIGNA**, we have learned that with preventive care, many of the complications and costs associated with an unhealthy birth can be reduced - and a lot of pain and suffering can be avoided. We know the best birth outcomes don't start in the delivery room. They are the product of planning, education, a healthy pregnancy and good medical and dental care.

Unfortunately, almost 500,000 babies in the United States are born prematurely, before the 37th completed week. This means that **one in eight babies** is born too early (11.9 percent of all live births). It takes a tremendous toll on families as premature babies fight to survive and may have ongoing health challenges throughout their lives.

### Studies show that:

- Women with periodontal disease may have an increased risk for pre-term, low birth weight deliveries.
- Pregnant women with chronic gum disease during the second trimester are up to **seven times** more likely to give birth prematurely.<sup>1,2</sup>
- Changes in estrogen and progesterone levels due to pregnancy multiply a woman's potential to develop gum disease.<sup>3</sup> This phenomenon, known as "pregnancy gingivitis," occurs frequently in pregnant women.
- Data suggests that each year, periodontal disease may be causing as many as 18% of preterm births and low birth-weight deliveries.<sup>4</sup>

### If you are pregnant, you are urged to:

- Increase your personal oral hygiene efforts and seek regular professional dental care.
- Keep all scheduled dental appointments and follow a regular treatment plan.
- Notify your dentist if you are taking any medications, or have noticed any inflammation, loose teeth or swelling, redness or bleeding of your gums.
- At every appointment, tell your dentist how far along you are in your pregnancy (the number of weeks).



### Good dental care may be linked with a decreased risk of pre-term birth!

Researchers found as much as an 87% reduction of premature births in women who were treated for gum disease.<sup>6</sup>

- More than half of all adults have the early stages of gum disease.
- Gum disease may be painless, but may include symptoms such as swollen, tender or bleeding gums.
- Gum disease is preventable and treatable. It's important to visit your dentist on a regular basis.

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*it's time to feel better*



<sup>1</sup>American Dental Association News Releases, Sept. 2001. <sup>2</sup>Journal of the American Dental Association, July 2001 <sup>3</sup>American Dental Association, Today's News, ([www.ada.org](http://www.ada.org)), March 28, 2002, <sup>4</sup>National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research: <sup>5</sup>American Dental Association, Frequently Asked Questions, <sup>6</sup>August 2003, Journal of Periodontology

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