



Ohio PRAMS Fact Sheet: Prenatal Oral Health Care

Background

Maintaining good oral health is an important component of prenatal care for women. The hormonal changes women experience during pregnancy result in increased susceptibility to gingivitis and periodontal disease (PD).¹ Gingivitis is the most common oral disease during pregnancy, causing inflammation of the gum tissue.² Recent studies have indicated that anywhere from 25 to 100 percent of women experience some degree of gingivitis during pregnancy.³ PD is a bacterial infection that causes the periodontium to break down, eventually loosening surrounding teeth.² This is a reservoir for bacterial toxins, putting both mother and fetus at risk for more severe infection.²

Although research regarding the role of good oral health in preventing adverse pregnancy outcomes has been controversial, poor oral health may have an effect on the health of the fetus. Mothers who have PD are more likely to have high amounts of bacteria, which can be transmitted to the newborn.⁴

Many health care providers limit dental treatment during pregnancy for fear of harming the mother or fetus. However, recent research has shown that the benefits of good oral health during pregnancy far exceed the risks.⁵ Despite this, only 22 to 34 percent of women in the U.S. reported seeing a dentist during pregnancy.² In addition, only half of pregnant women who had a dental problem during pregnancy reported seeing a dentist for care.² At particularly high risk are minority and low-income women, who have higher rates of PD and are less likely to have dental coverage.⁴

Pregnancy offers an opportunity for health care providers to educate women about the importance of good oral health. For some women it may be the only time they are eligible for dental benefits.⁵ Educating prenatal and oral care providers about the benefits of regular dental visits for all pregnant women is an important step in improving oral health among women and their children.

Ohio Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring

Data Highlights:

- > Approximately 40 percent of Ohio mothers received dental care during their pregnancy.
- > Non-Hispanic black mothers were less likely to receive dental care during pregnancy than non-Hispanic white mothers.
- > Women with more than 12 years of education were more likely to receive dental care during pregnancy than those with 12 or less years of education.
- > Mothers who received Medicaid and those who were unmarried or younger in age were less likely to receive dental care during pregnancy.
- > Women with normal birth weight infants were more likely to report that they received dental care.

*95 percent confidence interval

Source: 2006-2008 Ohio Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System, Center for Public Health Statistics and Informatics, Ohio Department of Health, 2011.

Prenatal Oral Health Care in Ohio, 2006-2008

Maternal Characteristic	Percent Who Received Dental Care During Pregnancy	95% CI*
Overall (n)	39.7 (1539)	37.8-41.8
Years of Age		
Less than 20	27.2	22.1-33.0
20-24	26.8	23.2-30.6
25-34	44.9	42.1-47.7
35+	57.2	51.5-62.7
Race		
Non-Hispanic White	42.9	40.5-45.3
Non-Hispanic Black	29.3	26.5-32.3
Hispanic	27.3	17.8-39.4
Non-Hispanic Other	34.2	24.5-45.5
Marital Status		
Married	46.2	43.6-48.9
Unmarried	30.3	27.4-33.3
Education		
Less than 12 years	23.5	19.0-28.7
12 years	25.8	22.5-29.5
More than 12 years	51.4	48.8-54.1
Payment for Prenatal Care		
Non-Medicaid	49.6	46.9-52.2
Medicaid	26.0	23.3-28.9
Birth Weight		
<2500 g	34.5	32.3-36.8
≥2500 g	40.5	38.3-42.7

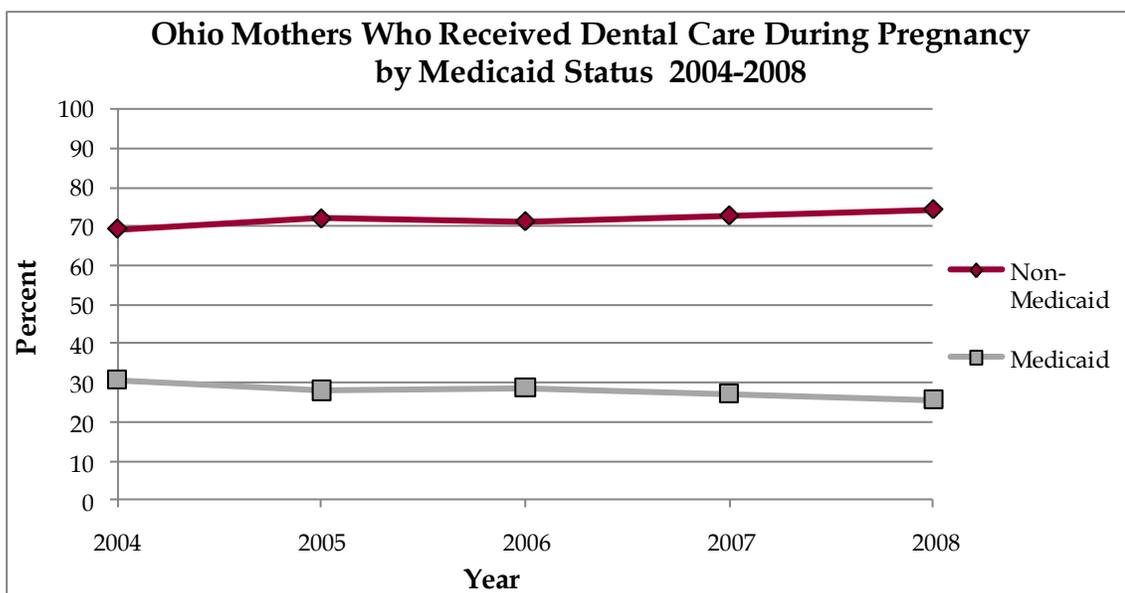




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Prenatal Oral Health Care



Source: Ohio Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System, Center for Public Health Statistics and Informatics, Ohio Department of Health, 2011

- As shown in the graph above, the percentage of Ohio mothers who received dental care during pregnancy was lower among mothers receiving Medicaid than those not receiving Medicaid. This disparity appears to have increased between 2004 and 2008.
- Lack of prenatal oral care is thought to be a significant cause of tooth decay in infants and young children due to oral bacteria from the mother being passed on to her infant.⁵
- Research has shown that children whose mothers have poor oral health and high levels of oral bacteria have a greater risk of developing oral infections at a young age.⁵
- Barriers to prenatal oral care include inability to pay for dental visits, lack of transportation to attend appointments, inadequate access to dental care clinics, lack of medical insurance and insufficient knowledge about the importance of dental care during pregnancy.⁵

Recommendations for Providing Oral Health Care to Women During Pregnancy⁵

- Educate women about the importance of good oral health during pregnancy.
- Prevention, diagnosis and treatment of oral diseases are highly beneficial and safe at any time during pregnancy.
- Routine dental care can help prevent the transmission of harmful oral bacteria from mother to infant.
- Pregnant women should be encouraged to brush teeth regularly, take multivitamins or folic acid supplements, and eat a healthy diet low in sugar.

References

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