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Improving a pregnant woman’s oral health can prevent dental disease complications during pregnancy and decrease tooth decay in her children. A mother’s oral health is one of the best predictors of her child’s oral health, so addressing oral health care and education early-on has the potential to improve the overall health and well-being of pregnant women and their families.

Research has found that poor oral health during pregnancy can lead to adverse pregnancy outcomes, including preterm birth, preeclampsia, and gestational diabetes, among others. Engaging pregnant women in oral health care is also important since periodontal disease, commonly known as gum disease, is associated with an increased risk for cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and respiratory infections. Thus, it is important to provide oral health care to women during pregnancy.

In California, nearly four in ten women aged 15 years and older completed a dental visit during pregnancy (41.9%) in 2012. The rates of dental visits completed for pregnant women enrolled in private health insurance plans in California (55.8%) was higher than those enrolled in Medi-Cal (30.7%), regardless of race/ethnicity (see Figure). Also the rate for the Medi-Cal population varied by race/ethnicity. African American/Black and Hispanic women were more likely to complete a dental visit during pregnancy (32.7% and 32.3%, respectively) than White (25.6%) or Asian/Pacific Islander women (23.9%).

Figure

Rate of Dental Visits During Pregnancy for Medi-Cal, Privately Insured, and California Women Aged 15 and Older, by Race/Ethnicity, 2012
