pregnancy & dental care go together

Dental care is a reproductive justice issue.

Many people don't realize that oral health can affect birth outcomes. During pregnancy, the body releases hormones that make you more vulnerable to gum disease and loose teeth. Pregnant people with gum disease are more likely to develop pre-eclampsia, a serious health condition. Some studies suggest they may also be at greater risk of premature birth or low birthweight. People who have consistent access to dental care, including during pregnancy, avoid these increased risks, and their children are less likely to get cavities later on.

"Two babies, two lost teeth" -- Byllye Avery

Avery is founder of the Black Women's Health Imperative and co-founder of Raising Women's Voices for the Health Care We Need. Years later, she is still suffering from serious dental problems linked to pregnancy and growing up without regular dental care.

"Pregnancy can be taxing on our bodies, and this includes our teeth. Losing a tooth during pregnancy should be an uncommon experience, but unfortunately that has not been the case for me and too many others," Avery says.

Dentistry is safe during pregnancy.

It is perfectly safe to go to the dentist during pregnancy. In fact, it is recommended by the American Dental Association, the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists and the American Academy of Pediatrics. When you go to the dentist, let them know you are pregnant, so they can safely treat you.

Unfortunately, many people do not have dental coverage.

Professional dental care is unaffordable to many pregnant people, especially those who rely on Medicaid for health coverage. That's why we are calling attention to the need for dental coverage, especially in pregnancy-related Medicaid.

COMMUNITY CATALYST

RAISING WOMEN'S VOICES for the health care we need

What can we do?

While Medicaid covers pre-natal medical visits in all states, only 23 states include comprehensive dental care in their pregnancy-related Medicaid coverage.

Medicaid Coverage of Pregnancy Dental Care by State

Legend:
- None (3 states)
- Emergency (9 states)
- Limited (15 states)
- Extensive (23 states + DC)
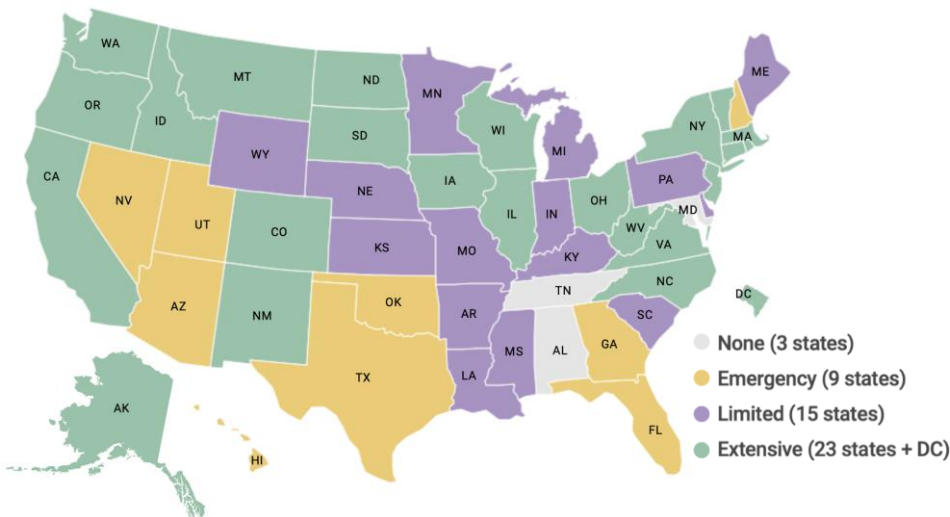
SOURCE: National Academy for State Health Policy www.nashp.org

Even people with private dental coverage can quickly exhaust their benefits and find themselves facing major dental bills (see Jen Kim's story, right).

Learn more about how we can improve coverage for and access to dental care before, during and after pregnancy! Join us at the "Pregnancy & Dental Care Go Together" convening Nov. 16 and 18 from 1 to 4 pm ET, co-sponsored by Raising Women's Voices and the Community Catalyst Women's Health Program and Dental Access Program.

REGISTER HERE:

Jen Kim's teeth were "crumbling" after she gave birth to her daughter in 2014.

She ended up needing two tooth implants and had multiple cavities filled. Even with dental insurance, she still faced major bills she had to pay out of pocket. "Unfortunately, women have to be advocates for their own health. Dental care during pregnancy is an area we have to seek information and ask questions about," Kim says. "I would highly suggest pregnant women be hyper aware about their dental hygiene and put aside money just in case they need postpartum dental care."

pregnancy & dental care go together

Join us!

November 16 & 18, 2021

Learn why lack of dental care before, during and after pregnancy is a reproductive justice issue, and what we can do about it.

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