

Researchers find evidence of periodontal disease leading to gestational diabetes

A study by a New York University dental research team has discovered evidence that pregnant women with periodontal (gum) disease are more likely to develop gestational diabetes mellitus than pregnant women with healthy gums.

The study, led by Dr. Ananda P. Dasanayake, a professor of epidemiology & health promotion at the NYU College of Dentistry, followed 256 women at New York's Bellevue Hospital Center through their first six months of pregnancy. Twenty-two women developed gestational diabetes. Those women had significantly higher levels of periodontal bacteria and inflammation than the other women in the study.

The findings, published in the April 2008 issue of the *Journal of Dental Research*, underscore how important it is for expectant mothers to maintain good oral health.

“In addition to its potential role in preterm delivery, evidence that gum disease may also contribute to gestational diabetes suggests that women should see a dentist if they plan to get pregnant, and after becoming pregnant,” says Dasanayake. “Treating gum disease during pregnancy has been shown to be safe and effective in improving women's oral health and minimizing potential risks.”

“In the future,” he added, “we can expect to see more research on the link between these two conditions involving other high risk groups, such as Asian and Native American women.”

Gestational diabetes is characterized by an inability to transport glucose -- the main source of fuel for the body -- to the cells during pregnancy. The condition usually disappears when the pregnancy ends, but women who have had gestational diabetes are at a greater risk of developing the most common form of diabetes, known as Type 2 diabetes, later in life. Hispanics, Asians, and Native Americans are at the highest risk for developing gestational diabetes. Eighty percent of the women in the NYU study were Hispanic.

Inflammation associated with periodontal disease is believed to play a role in the onset of gestational diabetes, perhaps by interfering with the normal functioning of insulin, the hormone that regulates glucose metabolism.

Source: New York University

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