



How Important is a Healthy Delivery for your Newborn?



By Dr. Walter R. Below,
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There are known and unknown/ unidentified reasons for low-birth weight babies and Pre-term labor. It is a realistic and very scary statistic that the leading cause of newborn deaths is in the 1st month due to premature births and low birth weight. Prematurity is defined as a birth before 37 weeks and the weight of 5 lbs, 5 ozs or less.

Other than both smoking and drinking alcohol during pregnancy, another culprit is among these factors and ties

into low birth weight babies and Pre-term pregnancies – **Periodontal disease**. There are specific bacteria associated with periodontal disease and are/is capable of stimulating excessive production of regulators which induce pre-term births. These regulatory proteins are **CYTOKINES** and **PROSTAGLANDINS**.

CYTOKINES - Are a category of less widely known signaling proteins and glycoproteins that hormones and neurotransmitters are used extensively in cellular communication. **PROSTAGLANDINS** - A natural occurring mediator of inflammation and smooth muscle contractions.

In 1996 a study was done that showed severe periodontitis was associated with a 7.5 to 7.9 times increase in low birth weight babies. Since this study in 1996 ongoing studies are done to help reduce the incidence of pre-term births and

low birth weight babies.

Gingivitis is the earliest form of periodontal disease. Hormone levels are definitely on the high scale during pregnancy and an estimated 50% of pregnant women will have gum disease to some extent. Periodontal therapy reduces the preterm births/ low birth weight infant rates by 68% in women with pregnancy associated gingivitis.

ANTIMICROBIAL THERAPY - Antimicrobial therapy refers to the use of chemical agents that either kill or inhibit the growth of bacteria that causes periodontal (gum) disease. The two most common forms an antimicrobial therapy are antiseptics and antibiotics. Products containing antiseptics are usually used to help prevent periodontal disease while antibiotics are used to treat the disease. Antibiotics are placed under the gums or given as pills. Some people may receive several rounds of anti-

otics before the disease responds.

Although it is still mysterious what the precise mechanisms involved in the association between periodontal infections and pre-term birth to date no harmful damaging effect caused by periodontal intervention in pregnant women has been reported. But the conscientious periodontal care of expectant mothers is extremely important.

I truly hope this will encour-

age all pregnant members to an inclusive dental exam and seek treatment for any gum disease. Ideally, periodontal infections should not be the start of your pregnancy, keeping a high level of oral hygiene and staying up to date on oral education is very much encouraged by our team here at the office. If you have any questions or concerns you can contact myself or staff, we will gladly answer your questions.

Dr. Below strives to stay ahead of the curve on new techniques and information to better serve his patients. He participates in over 100 hours of continuing education annually and has memberships in organizations like the American Academy of Cosmetic Dentistry focused on dentistry's future from a scientific and/or esthetic perspective.

Dr. Walter R. Below has practiced in Westlake for over 20 years, receiving his dental degree at the University of Louisville's School of Dentistry in 1981.

He is a Fellow in the Academy of General Dentistry, General Member of the American Academy of Cosmetic Dentistry, and member of the American Dental Society of Anesthesiology and American Association of Hospital Dentists.

He was a Clinical Instructor in the Department of Periodontics at Case Western Reserve Dental School and on medical staff of Lakewood Hospital.

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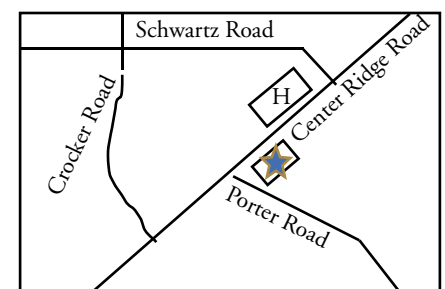


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