

## Consensus Statement: **Oral Health Guidelines**

The New Zealand College of Midwives (Inc) supports the primary health strategy in relation to oral health for women and their families.

### Rationale:

Achieving optimal oral health for pregnant women impacts positively on women and their babies' health. Poor oral health and periodontal disease is associated with adverse pregnancy outcomes eg miscarriage, premature labour, pre-eclampsia and low birth weight babies.

### Guidelines/Recommendations:

- Women are encouraged in self health oral cares prior to and during pregnancy.
- Inform women that pregnancy in itself is not a reason to defer routine dental care and encourage them to have regular dental examinations, and to follow through with the necessary treatments.
- Any necessary routine dental treatment can be provided throughout pregnancy but the ideal time period is between the 14<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> weeks.
- Provide women experiencing nausea and vomiting with information on nutritional and oral health practices.
  - Eat small amounts of a wide variety of nutritious foods throughout the day.
  - Use a teaspoon of baking soda in a cup of water as a rinse after vomiting to neutralise acid.
  - Use regular gentle tooth brushing to prevent damage to demineralised tooth surfaces.
- Promote breastfeeding as the sole dental caries preventative way to nurture babies.
- Discourage the use of sugary substances in bottles or sipper cups.
- Inform women that the bacteria that cause dental decay are transferred to babies by saliva sharing activities like spoon sharing, and pre-masticating foods fed to baby.

### References:

Cottrell-Carson, D. (2004). Promoting Oral Health to Reduce Adverse Pregnancy Outcomes. *Birth* 31:1 66 – 67

New Zealand College of Midwives (2002). *Midwives Handbook for Practice*. New Zealand College of Midwives. Christchurch

Oral Health Care during Pregnancy and Early Childhood Practice Guidelines  
New York State Department of Health (2006)

Thomas, N., Middleton, P., Crowther, C. (2008). Oral and dental health care practice in pregnant women in Australia: A postnatal survey. *BioMed Central Pregnancy and Childbirth* 8:13 Retrieved on 7/11/08 from <http://www.biomedcentral.com>

### Ratification:

*This Consensus Statement was ratified at NZCOM AGM 11 September 2008*

The purpose of New Zealand College of Midwives Consensus Statements is to provide women, midwives and the maternity services with the profession's position on any given situation. The guidelines are designed to educate and support best practice. All position statements are regularly reviewed and updated in line with evidence-based practice.