Prenatal Oral Health Screening Guide

Follow the steps below:

1. Take an oral health history. Use the Prenatal Oral Health Information Form as a questionnaire or, use the questions below to obtain it verbally.

Questions that may be included are as follows:

a. Do you have swollen or bleeding gums, tooth pain or any other issues with your mouth?
b. If you have any mouth pain, how do you handle it? (Can follow up by asking about taking medications, drinking, etc.)
c. Have you experienced morning sickness since becoming pregnant?
d. When was the last time you went to a dental appointment?
e. Have you made an appointment to get a dental check-up while you are pregnant?
f. Do you need help finding a dental professional?
g. Do you have any questions about receiving oral health care while pregnant?
(refer to conversation guide for more guidance on having this discussion)

2. Examine the patient's mouth for problems to see if treatment is needed. Check for swollen or bleeding gingiva, tooth decay and signs of infection. Some examples of common conditions like these are shown on the back of this card.

3. Refer and remind. If there is disease or need for urgent oral care, refer the patient to a dental professional. This is also a good time to talk about any fears they may have about receiving dental care while pregnant. Remind all patients about routine oral health practices:

a. See a dental professional for a check up before they deliver.
b. Brush twice a day and floss once a day.
c. If they get sick, rinse mouth with a solution of 1 tsp of baking soda in a glass of water. Try to avoid brushing immediately after vomiting.

4. Document findings. Document the oral exam and history in the patient's file, noting if there were any signs of oral health problems and if the patient was referred to a dental professional.

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Pregnancy Gingivitis: The gums may appear inflamed. The patient may have experienced gums that swell or bleed more often during brushing and flossing. Recommend brushing twice a day and flossing to help minimize inflammation. Refer for a professional dental cleaning and oral hygiene guidance.

Tooth decay: Early signs of tooth decay may begin to appear as white spots. More advanced tooth decay may be brown or black with visible holes or pits in the teeth. The patient may be experiencing tooth sensitivity or pain. Refer to a dental professional for treatment.

Tooth Erosion: Frequent vomiting in pregnancy may cause tooth erosion because of exposure to stomach acid. You may not be able to see if this is happening, but recommend rinsing the mouth with 1 tsp baking soda and water to neutralize acid after vomiting. Counsel to avoid highly acidic foods and drinks.

Pregnancy Tumors: Benign, red and large lump usually near the upper gum line. They can cause the gums to bleed. Refer to a dental professional for an evaluation.

Healthy Teeth: Women with healthy teeth have no signs of decay and no other clinical findings.

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