

'I'm pregnant...are my teeth heading for disaster?'

Recently, a pregnant patient of mine needed a lot of dental work. Unfortunately, this dental work could not wait until after the pregnancy due to the severity of her dental condition and is something that I really want expecting mothers to avoid. The months before you welcome a new member to your family will be some of the most exciting months in your life. But those nine months also come with many physical changes, and not just the most obvious one. An increase in hormones, which affects the body in many ways, and changes in sleep patterns and eating habits, can really take its toll on an expecting mother's gums and teeth. However, it is not inevitable that a pregnant woman's teeth and gums are doomed because of her pregnancy like many

people believe. Hopefully, after this month's article, expecting mothers will have the proper knowledge, and some good tips, to ensure a healthy mouth throughout pregnancy and following the delivery of their new baby.

It is very common for pregnant women to experience the swollen, bleeding gums associated with mild gum disease. Why? This is mainly because of the increased amount of hormones in the body. As a woman's hormones increase, their gums become more prone to irritation from plaque, potentially leading to gingivitis (Inflammation

of the gums). In fact, studies have actually shown that pregnant women are

more vulnerable to gum disease than women who aren't pregnant. Studies have also shown that there's a link between gum disease and certain complications, like preterm birth or low-birth weight. Therefore, the importance of proper oral care before and during

your pregnancy is essential for women not only to keep themselves healthy, but also for the health of their unborn child.

So what steps can you take to protect your smile? Here are three to consider:

- **Pay special attention to your gumline when you brush your teeth and make flossing an integral part of your daily routine. I recommend brushing 3-4 times each day and flossing once before bed. Brushing your teeth one extra time during the**

day could be exactly what is needed to keep gum inflammation down during you pregnancy.

- **Avoid starchy or sugary foods and instead stick to a diet high in fruits and vegetables. Due to cravings and poor sleep patterns, if your diet does suffer, make sure to brush or at least rinse out with water before going back to sleep following snacks and meals.**

- **I also recommend one extra professional cleaning at your dental office during your pregnancy. In fact, many of my pregnant patients request this without any recommendation after they realize the potential consequences of pregnancy on dental health. Some mothers are actually under the impression that they should not have their teeth cleaned while pregnant; this could not be further from the truth.**

As an expecting mother, you want to give your little one the best possible start

in life. Making your oral health a priority during the nine months of your pregnancy is one way you can do that. If you are taking good care of your mouth, you have already increased your chances of sustaining this level of oral health throughout your pregnancy, so please start implementing a proper home care routine now. By taking a little extra care with your oral health and paying attention to the lifestyle changes that will be occurring during your pregnancy, your teeth can be as healthy after you deliver as they were before you were pregnant. If you haven't visited your dentist recently, call them today to reserve an appointment. By working side-by-side with your dentist, a healthy mouth during pregnancy is very possible.

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Play by local author to be performed at One Act Festival

"Father and Son Together", a family drama by Rochester Hills resident Arthur E. Tucker Jr., will be one of four original short plays featured July 25 to 27 when Birmingham's Village Players and Playwrights @ Work present their fifth annual One Act Festival.

A technical illustrator in his "real" life, Tucker began writing short plays about ten years ago, and joined the writing group, Playwrights @ Work, a year later. His first efforts, he admits, "were kind of hard to stage." As he learned about writing for the stage, Tucker also began to submit his works to play festivals locally and around the country – and several were accepted for production. He can now boast that his

works have been seen on the East Coast, West Coast – and even in Sydney, Australia.

"Father and Son Together" is something of a departure for Tucker. He's known for writing often quirky comedies. "Father and Son", although it has comedic elements, deals with a son's return home to make peace with his family after being diagnosed with a terminal illness. Featured in the play are real-life father and son actors Ralph Rosati of Berkley and Marc Rosati of Riverview. Penelope Calcaterra of Waterford plays the mother.

Tucker, who has directed short plays at Village Players and the Ridgedale Players in Troy, elected to direct the piece. "I didn't want to trust it to any-

one else," he jokes.

Other plays featured at the One Act Festival this year are the dark comedies "A Slight Case of Paranoia" by Royal Oak writer Barbara Schmitt and "When a Skeleton Comes a-Knocking" by Royal Oak resident Ann Forsaith, and the romantic comedy, "Love and Lipstick" by Clarkston resident Jackie Sue Salter. Each short plays runs a half hour or less.

Performances are at 8 p.m. Friday, July 25 and Saturday, July 26 and at 2 p.m. Sunday, July 27. General admission seating is \$10. Tickets can be purchased at the door, by phone at 248-644-2075, or online at birminghamvillageplayers.com.