

A Short Review of Pediatric Dental Hygiene for Infants and Young Children

Nidhi Shah*

Department of Pediatrics, Greater Philadelphia Health Action (GPHA), USA

Abstract

Parents are often not well educated about basic oral hygiene for their infants and young children. Several oral health problems such as dental caries, fluorosis and dental infections begin in young age and can be prevented by regular dental care and guidance. Pediatric primary care physicians are the first point of access for parents regarding their child's dental concerns. Basic preventive measures for pediatric dental hygiene are reviewed in this article.

Keywords: Pediatric dental; Oral health; Dental hygiene

Short Communication

Parents are often not well educated about basic oral hygiene for their infants and young children. Several oral health problems such as dental caries, fluorosis and dental infections begin in young age and can be prevented by regular dental care and guidance. As pediatric primary care physicians routinely see infants and toddlers, they play a major role in prevention of dental issues, screening for dental caries and referral to pediatric dentist if essential. A thorough knowledge of preventive measures will help maintain excellent dental hygiene of children [1].

Pediatric primary care physicians must initiate dental screening examination as the first tooth erupts. American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends dental health assessment at 6, 12, 18, 24, 30 months and 3, 4, 5 and 6 years of age if the child has not started following up with a dentist [2]. All children must receive referral for a dentist at 1-year age.

The pediatric physicians should offer dental anticipatory guidance at all well child visits. This will appropriately educate parents to take informed decisions regarding their child's dental health.

Twice daily brushing with fluoride toothpaste along with flossing is the first step to good dental health. Flossing should be initiated once there is less space between two teeth. Children up to 8 years of age are not capable of proper tooth brushing coordination, so parental support is warranted according to the child's capabilities. Normal recommendations are to use a "smear" of toothpaste up to 3 years of age and then no more than "pea sized" at age more than 3 years [3]. It is important to educate parents regarding the adequate use of toothpaste quantity. Parents should also be instructed to clean their infant's gums daily with a clean, wet washcloth.

Educating parents regarding diet plays an important role in preventing caries. Fruit juices contain enormous amount of sugars and have high potential for dental caries. AAP recommends juice should not be introduced prior to age 1 year and then limit daily intake to 4 ounces in ages 1-3 years and 4-6 ounces for ages 4-6 years [4]. In older children, juices/milk must not be allowed in bed, instead it should be offered in a training cup and must not be sipped throughout the day. Several research articles show prolonged breastfeeding of more than 12-24 months increase the risk of dental caries [5,6]. Foods and beverages that contain combination of sugars and starches are cariogenic. Saliva-sharing activities like sharing utensils, cleaning pacifier in mouth must be avoided as cavity-causing bacteria can be passed from mother to child.

Professional fluoride varnish application by pediatric physicians/dentists performed every 6 months in pre-school children has shown to reduce the rate of caries. For children at high risk for caries, it must be applied four times in a year. Research has shown that preventive dental care is cost saving in addition to improving oral health [7]. Fluoride supplementation may be recommended based on the fluoride intake and caries risk. The United States Public health recommends community drinking water concentration of 0.7mg/L to prevent dental caries [8]. But due to confusion regarding fluoride supplements among physicians and parents, and non-compliance among parents regarding daily administration, fluoride supplements are not the first line measure for preventing caries [1].

Use of dental sealants to seal pit and fissures of primary and permanent teeth is an effective method for preventing and arresting caries [9].

Conclusion

Anticipatory guidance for pediatric dental care helps improve oral hygiene of children and reduce the chances of caries. Pediatric primary care physicians play a major role in providing appropriate education and preventive measures towards oral health of infants and young children.

References

1. Kliegman RM (2011) Nelson Textbook of Pediatrics (19th edn), Saunders an imprint of Elsevier Inc.
2. Bright Futures/American Academy of Pediatrics. Recommendations for Preventive Pediatric Health Care - Periodicity Schedule.
3. Clark MB, Slayton RL (2014) Section on Oral Health. Fluoride use in caries prevention in the primary care setting. *Pediatrics* 134: 626-633.
4. Heyman MB, Abrams SA (2017) Fruit Juice in Infants, Children, and Adolescents: Current Recommendations. *Pediatrics*.
5. Peres KG, Nascimento GG, Peres MA, Mittinty MN, Demarco FF, et al. (2017) Impact of Prolonged Breastfeeding on Dental Caries: A Population-Based Birth Cohort Study. *Pediatrics* 140: 2016-2943.

*Corresponding author: Nidhi Shah, Department of Pediatrics, Greater Philadelphia Health Action (GPHA), USA, Tel: +20 55 2364612; E-mail: nshah@gphainc.org

Received June 10, 2018; Accepted July 24, 2018; Published August 01, 2018

Citation: Shah N (2018) A Short Review of Pediatric Dental Hygiene for Infants and Young Children. *Neonat Pediatr Med* 4: 159. doi: [10.4172/2572-4983.1000159](https://doi.org/10.4172/2572-4983.1000159)

Copyright: © 2018 Awadef YF, et al. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.

6. Tham R, Bowatte G, Dharmage SC, Tan DJ, Lau MX, et al. (2015) Breastfeeding and the risk of dental caries: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *Acta Paediatrica* 104: 62-84.
7. Lee I, Monahan S, Serban N, Griffin PM, Tomar SL (2017) Estimating the Cost Savings of Preventive Dental Services Delivered to Medicaid-Enrolled Children in Six Southeastern States. *Health Serv Res*.
8. US Public Health Service recommendations for fluoride concentration in drinking water for the prevention of dental caries (2015) *Public Health Rep* 130: 318-331.
9. Cvikl B, Moritz A, Bekes K (2018) Pit and Fissure Sealants-A Comprehensive Review. *Dent J* 6: 18.