



Breastfeeding and Cavities in Toddlerhood

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Brief Biography

Has worked as a dentist in private practice since 2000 with a treatment emphasis on pediatric dentistry, orthodontia, functional therapy

Brief description:

The relationship between breastfeeding and the development of cavities is discussed controversially over and over again. Here the lecture aims at showing the processes that lead to cavities and identifying the protective mechanism that mother milk, in contrast to breast milk substitutes, offers. Thus it can be shown that breastfeeding represents the optimal early childhood prophylaxis for oral health.

Abstract

In connection with long-term breastfeeding, the increased risk to the child of cavities after the eruption of the teeth as a result of frequent intake of mother's milk is frequently discussed. For mother's milk has carbohydrates that can be metabolized into lactic acid by the cavity-promoting streptococcus mutans bacteria. This demineralizes the tooth enamel and thus causes cavities. Is there really a compelling connection between prolonged breastfeeding and early childhood cavities?

Cavities have, for only the last 8000 years, been a disease caused by civilization. But modern mankind has existed for 100,000 years. In other words: for 92,000 years human children were breastfed without getting cavities from it.

Over and over again severe cases of cavities can be observed even in small children, mostly caused by frequent feeding of sweetened teas or fruit juices in a bottle. Mother's milk also has sugar compounds (lactose), but it offers many protective mechanisms compared to breast milk substitutes:

- with breastfeeding the milk lands directly in the throat without contact with the teeth
- the pH value of the saliva is barely reduced
- it contains maternal antibodies IgA, IgS and lactoferrin
- there is a higher mineral content

In the newest studies, no causal connection between breastfeeding and early childhood cavities can be made. On the contrary: children who were breastfed for at least 40 days, have early childhood cavities less frequently than other children.

Thus mother's milk can be seen as a kind of "cavity killer"

As additional protection fluoride has proven valuable in cavity prophylaxis. It intervenes in an inhibitory way at various points in the development of cavities: The enamel becomes more resistant to acids, the re-mineralization is hastened and the metabolism of S.-mutans is inhibited. However



the effect is almost exclusively local which is why the fluoridation by tablet of small infants without teeth is forbidden.

In the sense of healthy development and the earliest possible prevention of cavities, dental efforts should, therefore, take the following steps in practice:

- Information to expectant parents about primary prevention
- Remediation of the teeth for both parents (specifically, the father also!!!)
- Mouth hygiene training and professional teeth cleaning for both parents
- Positive effects of breastfeeding
- Early care for even the smallest patients

Keywords

Cavities, primary prophylaxis, oral health, fluoride.