



Preventing Dental Caries in Breastfeeding Toddlers

Gina Weissman, DMD, RN, IBCLC, FABM, Yael Dubester David, DMD, IBCLC

Laniado Maternity Hospital, Netanya, Israel
HalavM Breastfeeding Clinic

Background:

Dental caries is a chronic disease that relates to the modern lifestyle. The diagnosis of early childhood caries (ECC) in breastfeeding toddlers usually results in an extreme treatment and prevention approach including the use of general anesthesia and the recommendation of abrupt weaning, which is not always supported by evidence-based literature.

Research Aims:

To critically analyze the current knowledge regarding the implications of breastfeeding on dental caries development

Methods:

Searches were conducted using PubMed, Clinicaltrials.gov, JStor and Google Scholar for relevant articles

Results:

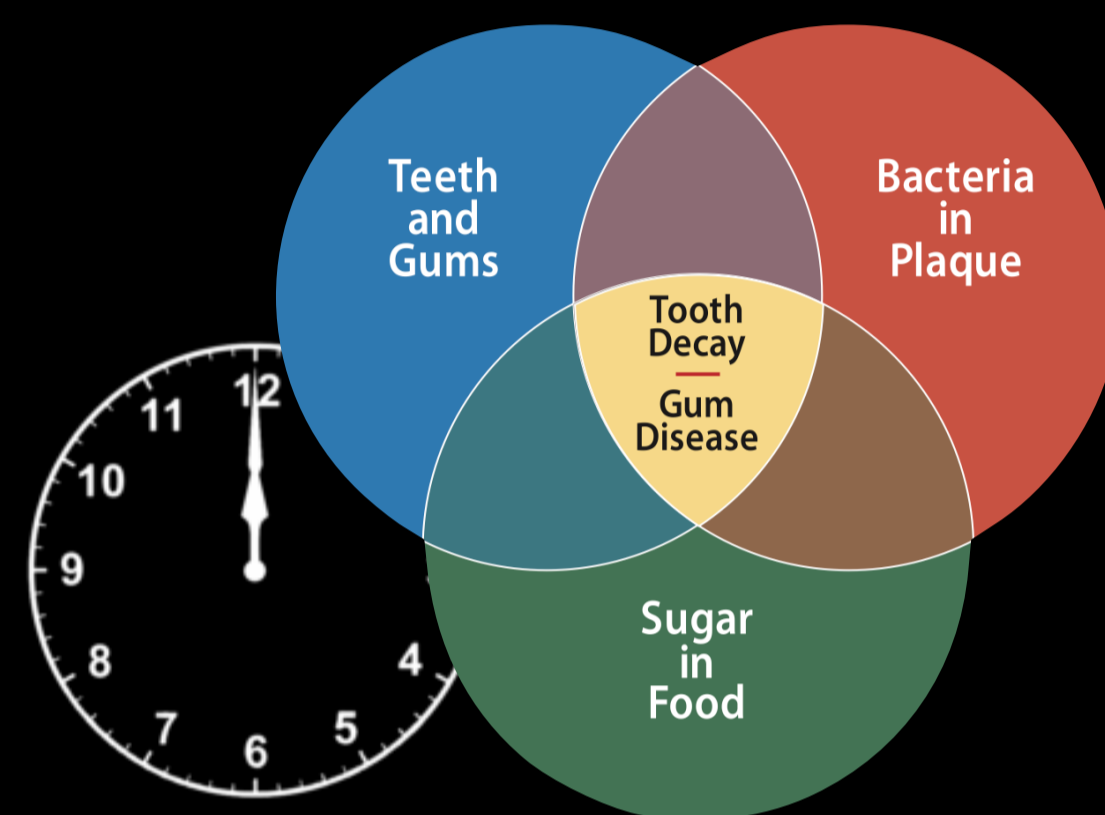
This study found 12 relevant articles: 2 systematic reviews, 2 meta-analyses, 4 cross-sectional studies and 4 cohort studies.

Conclusions:

When treating ECC, a conservative approach should be considered first. When conservative methods have failed to halt rampant caries, only then, an extreme approach including limiting ad-libitum night breastfeeding (rather than total weaning) could be considered.

Funding Sources:

None



Conservative methods:

- Frequent follow-ups (including non-restorative dental treatment if needed)
- Oral hygiene modification
- Non cariogenic nutrition
- Use of topical fluorides
- In cases of severe ECC consider avoiding ad-libitum night breastfeeding.

Oral Hygiene Recommendations



Dental Education

Introduction of tooth brushing with a smear of regular 1000 ppm fluoride toothpaste starting when solid food is introduced.

Frequent Follow-ups



A supportive environment for the mother and child is essential
Frequent follow-ups after an early diagnosis of ECC
The use of topical fluorides as a prevention and a conservative therapy

Dietary Recommendations



Non-Cariogenic Diet

Supporting healthy and non-cariogenic eating habits after the introduction of solid foods combined with drinking water and discouraging the consumption of juices and other sweet drinks



Dental Caries



No Caries



CDA clarifies: “Breastfeeding is just one of many risk factors that may contribute to the development of dental caries.”