

## Infant oral health care a benchmark to future

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### Abstract :

An infant is a very young offspring of humans. In Latin words infants, meaning “unable to speak”. It is mostly occur in children between ages of 1 month and 1 year. The AAPD proposes recommendations for preventive strategies, oral health risk assessment, anticipatory guidance, and therapeutic interventions to be followed by dental, medical, nursing, and allied health professional programs. Cavitated lesions in primary teeth can affect children’s growth result in significant pain and potentially lifethreatening infection and diminishes overall quality of life. This article lights on the concept of early dental examination, dental home, oral health risk assessment, anticipatory guidance.

**Keywords:** infant oral health, dental home, anticipatory guidance, oral health risk assessment

### Introduction:

Infancy is a child in first year of life after birth and a new born child is called as infant from birth till the completion of the first year of life. The oral cavity of infant in initial stages has gum pads alone and towards the later half there is the eruption of primary teeth in oral cavity<sup>1</sup>. Preventive oral care in infancy is the premise of destiny oral health. The primary goal of general dentist and pediatric dentist at this stage is to teach, educate and motivate the new parents to maintain good oral hygiene of the infant<sup>2</sup>.

The American association of Pediatric dentistry AAPD stated that infant oral health is one of the foundations upon which preventive education and dental care must be built to enhance the opportunity for a lifetime free from preventable oral diseases<sup>3</sup>.

### Importance of infant oral health care:

- Infant oral health care is the foundation upon which education and motivation regarding oral hygiene and other preventive dental care must be built on, to augment the prospect of a lifetime free preventive dental diseases.
- It encompasses the care of the oral cavity and monitoring of the development of the teeth.

The centres for disease control and prevention reports that cavitated lesion is the most prevalent infectious disease in our nation’s. Cavitated lesions in primary teeth can affect children’s growth result in significant pain and diminishes overall quality of life<sup>4</sup>.

However, healthcare professions are far more likely to see new mothers and infants than are dentists, it is essential that they be aware of the infection’s aetiology and associated risk factors of ECC, make appropriate decisions regarding timely and effective intervention and facilitate the establishment of Dental home<sup>5</sup>.

Preventive oral health care measures must be initiated in infant because of the following reasons<sup>6</sup>:

- a) Poor oral hygiene and improper infant feeding practices at night create an environment that promotes the colonization of cariogenic bacteria such as Streptococcus mutans in the infant mouth.
- b) Parents may be educated regarding oral health care practices to maintain the infant’s good oral health.
- c) Poor oral hygiene that may lead to early childhood caries may be identified at an early age and appropriate intervention must be planned.

A major problem contributing to poor infant oral health is insufficient or improper knowledge, attitude and practice related to infant feeding practices and oral care. Many authors stated that both pregnant mothers and parents of infants have not knowledge, attitude and practice regarding teething, infant feeding, weaning and bottle-feeding practices and cleaning of the mouth.

Infants with medically compromised health such as CHD may also be prone to poor oral health because they did not have proper dexterity.

Medically compromised infants are often on long term medication so therefore, that may have side effects of xerostomia or alteration of salivary properties such as flow, buffering capacity or rate.

Syrup in the form of medications for infants are often sweetened and this may result in cavitated lesions in oral cavity.

### **DENTAL HOME CONCEPT**

Dental home concept was derived from the concept of medical home that was proposed by American Academy of Pediatrics in 1992<sup>7</sup>. The aim of medical home was that the best care may be offered to a child when the child in focus and his / her family has a good relationship with the doctor and adopt good behaviour in hospital<sup>8</sup>.

ADA and AAPD recommended that a child should see a dentist and establish a dental home by one year or when the first tooth erupts.

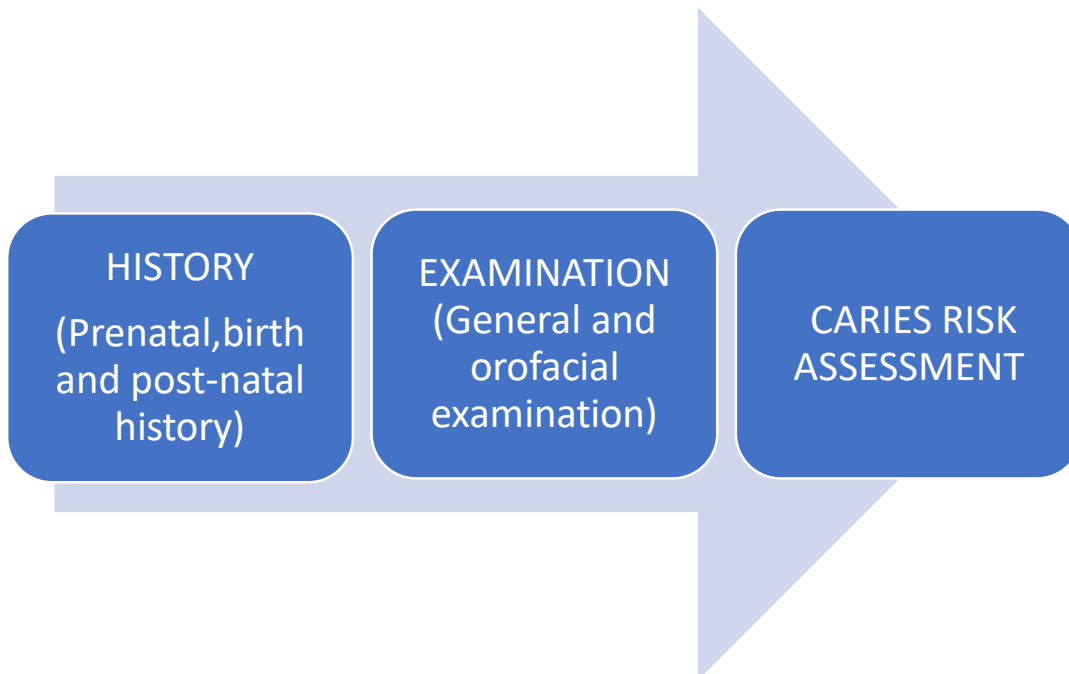


Figure 1: Steps at dental home

### **Anticipatory guidance<sup>9</sup>:**

Nowak 1995 stated that proactive counselling of parents and patients about developmental changes that will occurring the interval between health supervision visits that includes information about daily caretaking specific to that upcoming interval.

Anticipatory guidance encompasses of 3 types of responsibilities:

1. Gathering information
2. Establishing a therapeutic alliance
3. Providing education and guidance

Anticipatory guidance for pregnant mother:

- Counselling of mother towards preventive attitude and motivation.
- Pregnant mother knows about pregnancy gingivitis.
- Eating healthy foods such as fruits, vegetables, dairy products.
- Limit eating between meals
- Brushing teeth properly

**Table1: Parents educations for infants and toddlers**

Content area	Dentist's role
<b>Oral hygiene/ health</b>	
Care of gumpads	Clean the gum pads after each feeding with a soft clean cloth
Periodicity of dental visits	Educate the parents Brushing teeth properly
<b>Habits</b>	
Non-nutritive	Pacifier usage
Thumb-sucking	Discuss the ill- effect
<b>Nutrition and diet</b>	
Baby bottle decay pattern	Feeding practices
Importance of diet	Limit eating between meals Eating healthy foods such as fruits, vegetables, dairy products

**Conclusion:**

Caries risk assessment and ageappropriate anticipatory guidance needs to be practiced by dental practitioners. Infant oral health is a challenging in the rural and urban areas of our country due to lack of specialized dental practitioners(such as Pediatric and Preventive dentist) and infant oral health requires time consuming. To overcome these barriers, it is essential to educate and motivate parents, the medical practitioners and other health care to provide infant oral health care in joint collaboration with dental professionals.

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