

**Awareness about the importance of primary dentition among the parents of children visiting the pediatric department: A questionnaire survey.**

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**Abstract**

**Aim:** To assess the knowledge, attitude & awareness among the parents on dental care and the importance of primary teeth visiting the Paediatric department & to impart knowledge to parents on early risk assessment, prevention, and detection regarding dental problems.

**Materials and methods:** A cross-sectional questionnaire survey was conducted amongst 500 parents who visited the Paediatric department. Data were collected through an interview, using a structured questionnaire.

**Results:** The reason for visiting the dentist for a routine check-up was only 19.4%, while only 10% knew brushing should be started as soon as the first tooth erupts; only 33% of subjects made their child brush twice. 57.8% of subjects were aware that 1<sup>st</sup> permanent tooth erupts at the age of 6 years 25% of subjects had an idea about the fluoride application and pit/fissure sealants treatment to stop the initiation of decay. 62% knew that immediate treatment was available for the avulsed tooth.

**Conclusion:** There is a lack of knowledge in the majority of parents, pertaining to primary teeth, oral health, and its importance and methods to promote care of their children. They need advice and training regarding the care of primary teeth. Thus awareness regarding primary teeth is desirable among parents.

**Keywords:** Awareness, Importance of Primary Dentition, Habits, Child Oral Health Survey

## Introduction

Health is a universal need for all and general health cannot be attained or maintained without oral health. Oral health education begins from the footsteps of awareness. Today, various dental health education programs have been conducted in schools and other settings; however, these efforts will not succeed until people are not aware of the importance of oral health and positive attitude toward treatment modalities. [1] Teeth

are the most valuable greatest asset to humans. Among the two sets

of teeth, the first set of teeth i.e., primary teeth or milk teeth are very important for children for eating, phonetics, aesthetics, and even for space maintenance for permanent teeth. [2] Children under the age of 5 years generally spend most of their time with parents and guardians, especially mothers, even when they attend preschools or nurseries. These early years involve “primary socialization” during which the earliest childhood routines and habits are acquired. [3] Much like your own permanent teeth, your child’s primary teeth require professional and at-home dental care.

Decay can happen at any age, so it’s time to visit the dentist within six months of your child’s first tooth appearing, and certainly by age one. [4] Parents’ knowledge and positive attitude toward good dental care is very important in the preventive cycle. It has been found that the more positive the parents’ attitudes toward

dentistry; the better will be the dental health of their children. [5] Understanding parental perceptions about early childhood oral health is important in order to develop effective preventive measures since parents’ health behavior and practices usually have a direct influence on their children’s dental health. It has been reported that parents’ positive dental attitudes resulted in children with fewer carious teeth, better oral hygiene, and having received more dental care. Parents’ oral health knowledge and good dental care practices are also important in preventing premature loss of primary teeth and can effectively reduce the risk of future decay in permanent teeth. [5] Many a time, people responsible for the oral care of children feel or believe that since primary teeth will any way shed, it is not worth their while to spend time/money on providing good oral health to children. [3]

Thus the present study was undertaken to assess the awareness about the importance of primary dentition among the parents of children visiting the Paediatric department and to impart knowledge to parents on early risk assessment, prevention, and detection of dental problems.

## Aims & Objectives

To assess parents’ knowledge, attitude & awareness toward dental care and the importance of primary teeth visiting the Paediatric Department & to impart knowledge to parents on early risk assessment, prevention, and detection of dental problems.

## Materials & Methodology

A total of 500 parents who visited the Department of Paediatric and Preventive Dentistry were selected randomly. Ethical & research approval for a questionnaire-type study was obtained from Institutional Research Committee. Data were collected using a

self-administered questionnaire addressing various aspects of knowledge and attitude of parents toward oral health and treatment modalities.

## Results

After the questionnaire had been filled out by the parents, answers were tabulated in a Microsoft office excel 2003 spreadsheet. The reason for visiting the dentist for routine check-ups is only 19.4% while others are referred for pain or specific complaint. 60% of subjects knew teething causes irritation to gums, 35% knew about mild fever and increased drooling, 30% had an idea about other symptoms like refusal to food, rubbing cheek/ear region due to referred pain, mild rash around the mouth, diarrhoea; while 12% subjects were unaware.

Only 10% knew brushing should be started as soon as the first tooth erupts, 17% didn't know about the same while rest thought after all teeth erupted or after 1 year. In spite of knowing about brushing twice a day, only 33% of subjects made their child brush twice; 2% of subjects had their child's teeth brushed occasionally. 57.8% of subjects were aware that 1<sup>st</sup> permanent tooth erupts at the age of 6 years and 31.8% knew that it erupts behind the primary molar. 55% of subjects knew chocolates and improper brushing leads to decay, 35% were aware that even prolonged bottle feeding can cause caries, and very few knew about too many sweets causing decay.

25% of subjects had an idea about the fluoride application and pit/fissure sealants treatment to stop the initiation of decay. 68% of subjects knew about the treatment for decayed teeth like restorations, crowns, and extraction. Immediate treatment available for an avulsed tooth was known by 62% of subjects but only 2% knew that the avulsed tooth should be carried in milk, coconut

water, or normal saline, and 43% thought about water as the medium.

## Discussion

Oral health in children is associated with the oral health knowledge of their parents. <sup>[6]</sup> An early visit to the dentist acts as a preventive measure. The parents can be educated about home oral hygiene methods like the quantity of toothpaste to be used for children and the timings of tooth brushing and eating habits. Unfortunately, even in developed countries, parents are unaware of various preventive measure that has to be taken during the first 12 years of life. <sup>[5]</sup>

A similar study conducted by Farid H et al <sup>[7]</sup> concluded that 53.6% visited the dentist at the time of dental problem rather than routine dental check-ups compared to 81.6% in our study, while Hussein A.S. <sup>[9]</sup> reported that 31% of parents visited dentists when treatment is required and 50% visited for a routine check-up. 50.2% of participants their children used to brush twice daily in comparison to 33% in our research.

A study done by Nagaveni N. B. et al <sup>[8]</sup> showed that only 4 % of parents have knowledge of primary dentition, while our study reported 30% of the same. 20.2% of subjects in our study were aware of space maintainers with compared to 14.8% in their study Their study stated that only 2.7%/ of parents knew about pit & fissure sealants, while our study reported 25% about the same. 47.15% of parents were partially aware of the adverse effects of bad oral habits compared to 86% in their study.

Mani SA et al <sup>[10]</sup> reported that 91% of subjects knew the timing of the eruption of first teeth in the oral cavity with compared to our study which is 70%. Only 10% of subjects in our study were aware that brushing should be started as soon as the first tooth erupts compared to 38% in their study.

Our study reported that 30% of subjects were aware of the number of primary teeth when compared to 36% in a study done by Jain R et al<sup>[11]</sup>. 46.2 % were aware that bad oral habits such as tongue thrusting, mouth breathing, thumb sucking, etc can lead to malaligned teeth, while our study showed 78% about the same. Parents visiting dentists for a routine dental check-up was only 19% in our study in comparison to 75% in the same study. 54% reported visiting their dentist only during problems.

Overall 57.25% of subjects were aware of primary dentition, 58% were aware of dental caries and 60% knew about oral hygiene habits.

The educational campaigns should be conducted to create awareness through educational institutes showing the models, charts, and posters, demonstrating pictures of various treatment procedures. Awareness programs should be developed for parents to encourage them to seek preventive primary teeth health care. The programs should emphasize the possible consequences of decay, improper cleaning, and prolonged use of sweets, etc.

### Conclusion

Based on the result of this study the following conclusions can be made that majority of participants have wrong behavioral habits towards their kids. There is a lack of knowledge in the majority of parents, pertaining to primary teeth, oral health, and its importance and methods to promote care of their children. They need advice and training regarding the care of primary teeth. Thus awareness regarding primary teeth is desirable among parents.

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### Legend Tables

Table 1: Awareness regarding bad oral habits

Thumb/digit sucking	80.2%
Lip sucking	38%
Tongue thrusting	55.6%
Nail biting	14.8%
No idea	7.8%

Table 2: Results obtained from the questionnaire illustrating awareness of parents.

Question	Positive	Negative
1. Awareness/ Attitude About Primary Dentition		
Primary and permanent dentition	83%	17%
Knowledge about the number of primary teeth	30%	70%
Eruption time of first primary tooth	70.4%	29.6%
The time span of primary dentition	46.2%	53.8%
Feeding Habits		
Stopping of demand feeding after the eruption of the first	46.8%	49.2%

tooth in the oral cavity		
Contraindication of sweetened pacifier while teething?	32%	68%
2. Oral Hygiene Habits		
Usage of pea-size toothpaste	80.4%	19.6%
Age of starting adult toothpaste	25%	75%
Brushing technique	75%	25%
3. Orthodontic Evaluation& Habits		
Is spacing normal in primary dentition?	51%	49%
Importance of primary dentition in speech	69.6%	30.4%
Malalignment of teeth due to bad habits	78.4%	21.6%
Premature extraction of primary teeth can lead to malalignment	63.6%	36.4%
Space maintainers are placed to prevent space loss if the primary tooth is extracted untimely	20.2%	79.8%
4. Dental Caries Knowledge & Treatment		
In between snacking cause early childhood caries	56.2%	43.8%
Overnight milk stays in oral cavity may lead to caries	82.2%	17.8%
Water should be given after feeding	49.4%	50%
Importance of treatment for caries in primary teeth	13%	87%
Decay can lead to swelling if not treated	89.2%	10.8%