



ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Infant oral health care knowledge and awareness among parents in Abha city of Aseer Region, Saudi Arabia



Abdulrahman Alshehri ^{a,*}, V.S. Nasim ^{b,1}

^a Ministry of Health, Abha, Asir Region, Saudi Arabia

^b King Khalid University, College of Dentistry, P.O. Box 3263, Abha 61471, Saudi Arabia

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Abstract Kids under the age of 5 years generally spend most of their time with their parents. It has been found that young children's oral health maintenance and outcomes are influenced by their parent's knowledge and beliefs. This study was done to assess the parent's knowledge about the oral health of their kids aged 1–5 years. The study bases its findings on the survey conducted at the Diagnosis Clinic of the King Khalid University, Abha through a 20-items questionnaire, which was distributed to 425 parents by the researchers. Responses of the parents were recorded on a Likert Scale and multiple choice questions written in Arabic language. The results show insufficient knowledge of Saudi parents about their kids oral health. It also shows that oral health care awareness programs are very important to secure a healthy oral condition among kids.

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1. Introduction

Oral health is an important part of overall health; good oral health contributes positively to the physical, mental and social well-being of infants and to the full enjoyment of their lives by allowing them to speak, eat and socialize without experiencing pain, discomfort or embarrassment.

Infant oral health care is the foundation on which a life time of preventive education and dental care can be built up in order to help acquire optimal oral health into child and adulthood.¹

The preventive oral health process among infants must begin early, i.e. the first year of infancy to ensure a successful oral hygiene. The purpose of an infant oral health program, therefore, is to improve access to oral health care and to provide counseling and anticipatory guidance in oral hygiene for children aged 6 months to 5 years.² The first step of infant oral health care is the preventive oral health behavior of parents since they would influence their children's behavior in adapting to the preventive oral health practices as they grow along.³

The American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry (AAPD) recommends that infants should consult the dentist within

* Corresponding author. Mobile: +966 554120081.

¹ Tel.: +966 552620649.

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6 months of getting their first tooth or by their first birthday. It also, after the initial visit, recommends regular visits to the dentist, based on the child’s oral health.

Research shows that parents play an important role in the decision making processes vis-à-vis oral health care for their children.⁴ Firstly, identifying the indispensable role of parents about health care for their children becomes mandatory. Secondly, assessing the knowledge and attitude of parents regarding infant oral health is equally significant. Thirdly, educating the parents about the oral hygiene is the next step since they are the primary care givers.

And finally, examining the baseline knowledge and opinions of parents is the inherent objective of this study because it is the first step to know how they assess the following:

- The knowledge and attitude of parents on preventive dental care for infant oral health (IOH);
- Parental awareness of the importance of IOH;
- The need to impart knowledge to parents on early risk assessment, prevention and detection regarding infant oral health; and
- The role of vision in IOH.

2. Methods and subjects

A cross-sectional survey was conducted in the Diagnosis Clinic at King Khalid University Dental Clinics Abha during March–April of the year 2014 after obtaining the ethical approval from the Head of the Department Human Research Ethics Committee of King Khalid University, Abha, Aseer Region of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and from the Dean of Dental Clinics and College of King Khalid University.

Out of a total of 425 subjects, 323 subjects agreed to participate in the survey. A multiple choice questionnaire was developed to conduct the survey. The questionnaire provided to the subjects consisted of 20 items which include various preventive strategies of preventive dental health and the behavior and knowledge of parents towards their kids’ oral healthcare. The questionnaire was designed in Arabic language to get

the exact result. Moreover, the questionnaire was pre-tested as well. A randomly selected group of patients at the Dental Internship Clinics under the King Khalid University was asked to complete the questionnaire and provide their impressions of the content in the questionnaire. The majority of participants reported that questions were easily understood, and it took the participants 5–10 min to complete the questionnaire. The results were assessed based on the recommendations of American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry (AAPD).¹

3. Results

Of the 323 questionnaires that were given to both parents (male and female) 301 questionnaires were completed and returned back. The researcher, in order to secure authentic statistical results, excluded non-answered questions from the questionnaires. Overall, the response rate was 93.19%. On knowledge and attitude towards their kids’ oral health, we found that 41.67% parents know the correct period of kids’ teeth eruption in oral cavity (see Table 1), but only 72.62% of them acknowledged that they take care of their kids’ oral healthcare before teeth eruption (see Table 2). In all, 66.89% of the respondents believe that primary and permanent teeth are equally important while the rest believes that there is a difference in importance between primary and permanent teeth (see Table 3). In total, 195 participants agreed with that “Visit the dentist is necessary regardless of the health of your kid’s mouth” while mean of 143.7 of the whole participants are interested to choose qualified dentists to treat their kids (see Tables 4 and 5). More than 92% of participants, on the other hand, strongly feel the importance of healthy foods and prefer breast-feeding to artificial-feeding.

Among the participants, only 76 of them (25.25%) breast-fed their kids (see Tables 5b,c and 6). The survey results show that 213 participants (70.67%) were interested to clean their kids’ mouth after breast-feeding or at least one time daily (see Table 7) using different means of mouth cleaning (see Table 8). Of the total respondents, 30.22% had kids with decayed teeth, while 197 of them (5930%) supposed that dental caries is a common disease in Saudi Arabia and 157 of them

Table 1 (Q5) When kid’s first teeth begins to emerge?

	Before 1st year		First year		Second year		Third year		I don’t know		Total
Responses received	126	41.86%	125	41.53%	25	8.31%	5	1.66%	20	6.64%	301

Table 2 (Q2) When do you think should pay attention to the health of the kid’s mouth?

	Since birth	For view days after birth	After first teeth emerge	If any complain is there	No need	Total					
Responses received	77	25.25%	15	4.92%	178	58.36%	29	9.51%	6	1.97%	305

Table 3 (Q6) Do you think primary teeth are as important as permanent teeth?

	Primary is not at all important		Primary teeth are slightly important		Permanent both are equally important		Total
Responses received	20	6.60%	80	26.40%	203	67.00%	303

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