

with development of early childhood caries and reference given for this observation is a review article published in 1998. The article further says that prolonged bottle or breast feeding provides an environment that enhances the development of early tooth decay. No specific reference has been cited for this statement.

Keeping the relevance of the optimal infant and young child feeding practices as an important tool in the fight against child morbidity and mortality, it is crucial to re-examine the facts cited in the article.

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#### REPLY

The focus of the article was dental caries and its potential causes in a child. Early childhood caries (ECC) in the breastfed infant is related to the extended and repetitive feeding times with prolonged exposure of teeth to fermentable carbohydrates without appropriate oral hygiene measures. Two case control studies from developing country settings showed that prolonged nocturnal breast feeding was a significant risk factors for ECC development(1,2). Night time use of bottles and sweetened drinks are well established risk factors for development of ECC. The recommendations of infant feeding, however, have to be in context of overall benefits of breastfeeding in terms of child survival.

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