

 **Prevention of early dental caries in children**
(*Eur J Paediatr Dent* 2010;11(4):181-4)

Early childhood caries is a virulent form of dental caries that can destroy the primary dentition of toddlers and preschool children. It occurs worldwide, afflicting predominantly disadvantaged children. Although *Streptococcus mutans* is the most likely causative agent, diet also plays a critical role in the acquisition and clinical expression of this infection. Early acquisition of *S. mutans* via vertical or horizontal transmission is a key event resulting in accumulation of these organisms to levels exceeding 30% of the total cultivable plaque flora, which in turn leads to rapid demineralization of the tooth structure. Affected children may also have other associated health problems, ranging from local infections to oral pain that manifest as difficulty in eating and sleeping, and reduced growth. Oral rehabilitation usually consists of restoration or surgical removal of carious teeth. Although treatment can be instituted in the dental clinic, it becomes costly when general anesthesia is required for sedation.

COMMENT Primary prevention of early childhood caries has largely been restricted to counseling the parents regarding proper feeding behavior, oral hygiene measures and topical antimicrobial therapy to address the infection.

 **Writing about exams worries boosts performance** (*Science* 2011 Jan 14;331(6041):211-3)

This study tested a psychological intervention designed to improve students' scores on high-stakes exams and to increase our understanding of why pressure-filled exam situations undermine some students' performance. It was expected that sitting for an important exam leads to worries about the situation and its consequences that undermine test performance. It was tested whether having students write down their thoughts about an upcoming test could improve test performance. The intervention, a

brief expressive writing assignment that occurred immediately before taking an important test, significantly improved students' exam scores, especially for students habitually anxious about test taking.

COMMENT Simply writing about one's worries before a high-stakes exam can boost test scores. Clearly expressing feeling and thoughts orally or in writing about a problem seems to alleviate it to some extent.

 **Early treatment of acute otitis media in children** (*N Engl J Med* 2011 Jan 13; 364(2): 105-15)

Recommendations vary regarding immediate antimicrobial treatment versus watchful waiting for children younger than 2 years of age with acute otitis media. In this study, 291 children 6-23 months of age with acute otitis media, were randomized to receive amoxicillin-clavulanate or placebo for 10 days. Among the children who received amoxicillin-clavulanate, 35% had initial resolution of symptoms by day 2 and 80% by day 7; among children who received placebo, 28% had initial resolution of symptoms by day 2, and 74% by day 7. Mean symptom scores over the first 7 days were lower for the children treated with amoxicillin-clavulanate than for those who received placebo. The rate of clinical failure was also lower among the children treated with amoxicillin-clavulanate. Mastoiditis developed in one child who received placebo. Diarrhea and diaper-area dermatitis were more common among children who received amoxicillin-clavulanate. There were no significant changes in either group in the rates of nasopharyngeal colonization with nonsusceptible *Streptococcus pneumoniae*.

COMMENT Children with an accurate diagnosis of acute otitis media recover quickly when they are treated with an appropriate antimicrobial agent.

K Rajeshwari
drkrajeshwari@hotmail.com