Prevention of dental caries: when to start? - Systematic review of literature

Fátima Vitorino, José Frias-Bulhosa*, Alice Martins*
*Fernando Pessoa University

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Introduction
Caries have significant repercussions at individual, family and socioeconomic level, with immediate and long-term impact. Portugal, after more than 20 years of public oral health programs is still far from the World Health Organization European target for 2020, of 80% of 6 years old children caries-free (54,8% em 2008). Effectively, caries remains the most frequent oral disease in all age groups in the Portuguese Population and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development 2008 report has identified Portugal as one of the European countries in which there were proportionately “worse improving” of the state of population oral health.

Aims
• Determine the ideal time to start caries prevention.

Methods

Inclusion criteria:

Results
17 articles selected.
Caries is preventable. During the first year of life, the caries prevalence is close to zero and the possibility of prevention is very high.

Caries prevention effectiveness

The priority prevention strategy is health education, which must be provided before risk factors installation (vertical transmission of cariogenic bacteria, eating habits and oral hygiene). Ideally, it should be started before baby oral cavity colonization by cariogenic bacteria.

Ideal time for caries prevention beginning:
Pregnancy reinforced after birth
(to teachable moment)

Conclusion
The literature is unanimous that the caries prevention should start during pregnancy by health education and be periodically reinforced after the baby is born.

Clinical implications
Take an active role in the promotion of oral health and prevention of oral diseases, through community interventions to pregnant women and newly parents, to increase oral health literacy of communities.