

Common problems, management strategies, and treatment challenges

Early oral health and impact on childhood well-being



Adopting oral health care measures early on lays the foundation for a lifetime of good oral and overall health¹



Timely preventive and therapeutic oral care measures play a crucial role in preserving oral health in young children and fostering good oral hygiene practices¹

Common oral health issues in children aged 2 to 6 years²



Abnormal tooth eruption and development



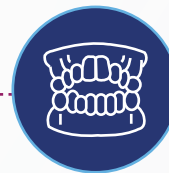
Early childhood caries



Pulpal and periapical infections



Trauma to the primary teeth



Malocclusion or tooth malposition

Oral habits leading to malocclusion and tooth mispositioning



Digit sucking



Tongue thrust



Lip biting/sucking



Habitual mouth breathing



Unilateral mastication or chewing

Oral health extends beyond merely healthy teeth and gums, and has a profound impact on overall wellbeing and quality of life

Impact of poor oral health in young children^{1,3}



Pain and discomfort



Oral infections with a negative impact on general health



Difficulties in biting, chewing, and swallowing



Embarrassment about appearance due to missing or broken teeth and tooth discolouration



Absence from school and play activities



Cognitive development of the children



Difficulty in social interactions and communication



Low self-esteem



Increase in emergency dental visits



Loss of parents' workdays



Increased healthcare expenses

Prevention is a key strategy in the management of dental caries in children⁴



However, there exists a gap between the theoretical importance of prevention and the implementation of relevant clinical measures

Barriers to oral health in children⁴

- ❗ Lack of knowledge and awareness
- ❗ Insufficient oral health care training
- ❗ Lack of collaboration with specialists
- ❗ Lack of motivation
- ❗ Poor reimbursement and financial resources
- ❗ Uncooperative behaviour by young children
- ❗ Oral health not perceived as a priority

Prevention and management of early childhood caries^{1,5}



Schedule regular visits to the paediatric dental professional



Brush for 2 minutes twice a day with fluoride toothpaste



Avoid consumption of sweet foods or drinks before bedtime and between meals



Parents should supervise their children while brushing until they reach at least 7 years of age



Include nutritious and balanced meals in the diet



Avoid acidic drinks and beverages with a high sugar content



Include natural sugar sources like fruits instead of snacks with added sugar



Stimulate chewing

Emergence of first permanent molars⁵



Permanent molars are crucial teeth in the long term, with important function in the chewing and grinding of food

Many children present with first permanent molars (FPMs) with a compromised prognosis. This is because of underlying developmental defects, which can have a negative long-term impact



Associated risk



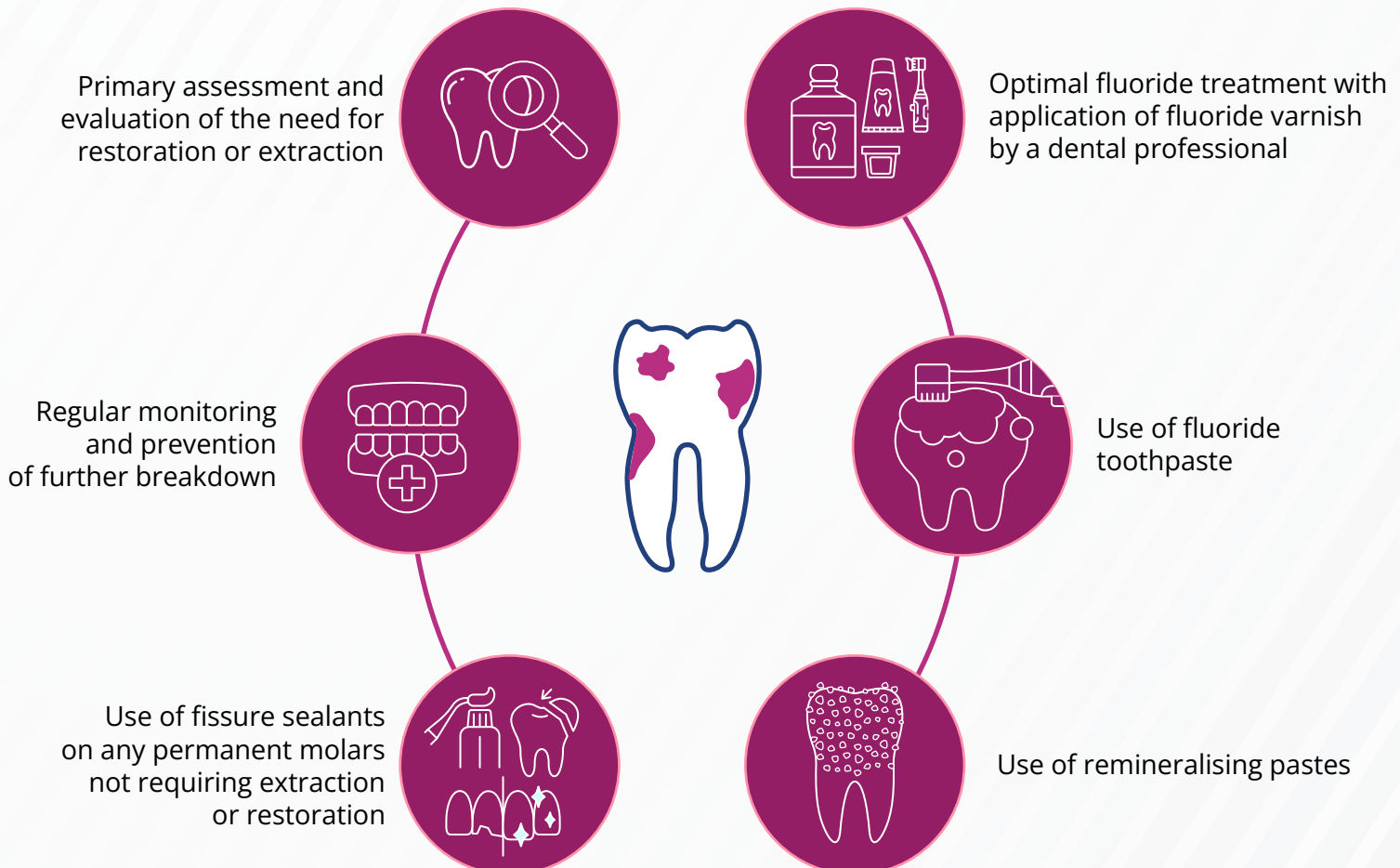
- ! Predispose to greater risk of caries development
- ! Underlying enamel defect
- ! Molar incisor hypomineralisation

Associated pathologies



- ! Deep caries or restoration
- ! Pulpal or periapical pathology
- ! Extensive hypomineralisation involving multiple surfaces with associated post-eruptive breakdown

Management of carious FPMs requires a comprehensive and multidisciplinary approach⁵



Fluoride recommendation⁶



Fluoride has 'cariostatic' or caries-preventing and remineralising properties

Age-appropriate fluoride recommendations must, therefore, be followed:



Toothpastes containing 1,000 ppm fluoride are recommended for children between 2–6 years of age




Higher concentration of fluoride may be considered based on individual caries risk



For children aged 2–6 years, use a pea-sized amount of toothpaste



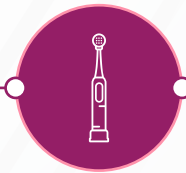
Application of a fluoride varnish by a dental professional (typically, 22,600 ppm) 2–4 times per year for children with an increased caries risk

 However, excess ingestion can lead to fluorosis particularly in young children during tooth formation and eruption

Electric toothbrushes in paediatric dentistry^{7,8,9}

There is scientific evidence to recommend oscillating-rotating electric toothbrushes to paediatric dental patients

Reduction in gingivitis



Plaque removal

Key messages

- ✓ Oral care during the early years builds the foundation for a lifetime of good oral health and overall well-being
- ✓ Prevention is a more durable and cost-effective strategy than treatment in the management of oral problems
- ✓ Oral issues during childhood and adulthood can be effectively prevented by adopting good oral care measures since the emergence of the first teeth
- ✓ Regular check-ups and parental commitment, combined with advanced paediatric dentistry techniques, can aid the timely detection and treatment of dental problems

References

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Additional resource

www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/oral-health

