

The first thousand days of mother and child: a lifelong investment in oral health!

Luigi Paglia
Editor in chief
European Journal of Paediatric Dentistry

10.23804/ejpd.2022.23.01.01

editorial

Obstetricians, gynaecologists, paediatricians, pharmacists, paediatric dentists and hygienists are all health professionals that women encounter during the perinatal period. Today we know that during pregnancy and even earlier—at a pregnancy planning phase—the factors that will influence the future of the child's oral health are established. These are the 1,000 days stretching from conception to the child's second year of life, a time that will influence the health of oral cavity for life, and the foundations for the overall health are laid.

In fact, oral health is the result of the ongoing prevention carried out by all the above-mentioned health professionals and operators. Often, dental diseases result from misinformation, mistakes and carelessness that begin in pregnancy and continue for the first few years of life.

During pregnancy there is an increased risk for and/or worsening of periodontal diseases and a higher incidence of dental erosion and caries for the mother-to -be. In turn, this can even lead to an increase in pregnancy-related diseases such as premature births and miscarriages. Maternal nutrition, oral hygiene and lifestyle choices are the main elements influencing the health of both the mother and the child. Adequate nutrient levels during crucial periods of fetal development can lead to optimal fetal tissue programming and confer the child a greater protection against chronic diseases later in life. It is therefore imperative to promote information campaigns on these topics to prepare caregivers and women for the perinatal period. A survey carried out in Italy on a sample of women of childbearing age shows widespread misinformation about the oral health of mothers and children. The knowledge of health providers is also unsatisfactory: while most respondents recognise the importance of care during pregnancy, they do not advise patients to have dental check-ups or ask them if they have underwent dental care in the previous 12 months. We are carrying out a similar project with the University of Barcelona and it would be interesting to have data from other countries: we will consider them for immediate publication in our journal.

Only by improving our knowledge of different realities we will achieve an effective dissemination of information and reduce the incidence of both pregnancy-related pathologies and those affecting childhood.

We are looking forward to your contributions!