

# Has the Qovid-19 Epidemic Affected Children's Oral Health Worldwide?

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## Editorial

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, most parents have been afraid to go to dental offices. They don't feel safe to refer for visits and dental treatments; consequently, after passing one year, we see the prevalence rate of dental decay and increasing dental abscesses, and extraction of teeth which could be preserved by implementing good oral hygiene. At the time of the COVID-19 epidemic, we saw a dramatic drop in pediatric visits and dental treatments. In a telephone survey we had at the Sepideh Dental Clinic, most parents emphasized that did not want to risk their children's lives, even if they had suffered from toothache or dental problems. Interestingly, the majority of patients who sought treatment had dental insurance that did not want their insurance period to be expired. We also found that patients who had previously undergone dental treatment and had not been referred for a routine visit, at present that they were referred for dental treatment, had experienced severe dental caries and dental abscesses. The reason for this was stated by the parents being at home and the excessive consumption of snacks and sweets, even if they brushed once a day [1]. On the other hand, in some parent's opinion, the negligence of oral hygiene and being awake late at night are the two most important factors that are caused this problem. A survey conducted by Dr. Sarah Clark at C.S Mott Children's Hospital in Michigan in January found that a total of 14% of parents did not consider it safe for their child to see a dentist during the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, 40% of parents have not tried to receive preventive dental care for their children since the onset of the pandemic. The director of the study also noted that these findings show the importance of making dental offices safer during the epidemic to all dentists. On the other hand, he believes

that the dental community should be actively involved in reminding parents of the importance of regular dental examinations.

According to a new editorial, COVID-19 reduces access to pediatric dental care and is likely to lead to poor oral health in children. The authors of this editorial, published at the BMJ Pediatrics Open (January 22, 2021), noted that as a result of the COVID-19 epidemic, tooth decay and an increase in extraction of teeth under general anesthesia in children (especially in vulnerable economic and social communities) has increased. The lead author of the paper, Dr. Ifeanyichukwu Okike of the Derby University Hospital and Burton National Health Service (NHS), and colleagues wrote: "Since the epidemic, little attention has been paid to children's oral health in the UK. The default position is that the responsibility for this work should be left to dental professionals, while other health care workers can also play a role in this matter" [2]. To conclude, the closure of dental offices and clinics to cut off the virus transmission chain led to the disruption of routine care at pediatric dental services, including children who had to visit a dentist for the first time. Furthermore, lack of parental awareness of oral hygiene practices is associated with dental caries in children, and the emphasis on increasing parental and caregiver information about oral health can help tooth decay prevention in high-risk children.

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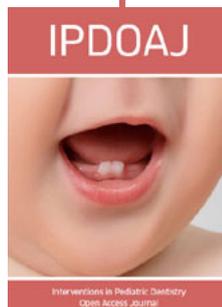
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