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PRINT ISSN : 0040-8891

The Bulletin of Tokyo Dental College

Vol. 49 (2008) , No. 2 :59-63



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Longitudinal Study on Influence of Prolonged Non-nutritive Sucking Habits on Dental Caries in Japanese Children from 1.5 to 3 Years of Age

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(Received October 24, 2007)

(Accepted February 29, 2008)

Abstract: The purpose of the present study was to investigate the relationship between infant sucking habits and the prevalence of caries in Japanese preschool children. The study was designed as a prospective, longitudinal study starting with 592 children aged 18 months. Information on sucking habits and patterns of feeding was collected from parents in the form of a questionnaire. Children who continued breast or bottle-feeding at 18 months of age were eliminated prior to the evaluations. The children were divided into 3 groups according to their sucking habits at 18 months of age: Group 1: children with a finger-sucking habit (n=151); Group 2: children who used a pacifier (n=45) and Group 3: children with no oral habit (n=205). Clinical examinations were carried out by one of the authors.

Mean dft and prevalence of caries were not statistically significant among the 3 groups at 18 months of age. However, only 10.6% of the children in Group 1 exhibited caries at 36 months of age, compared with 17.1% in Group 3 and 24.4% in Group 2. Group 1 children showed the smallest mean dft at 0.30 among the 3 groups at 36 months of age, and those in Group 2 showed 1.18; the difference was statistically significant ($p < 0.01$).

The results suggest that children with a finger-sucking habit are more likely to be free of caries by the age of 3. However, use of pacifier at 18 months of age is a potential risk factor for the development of dental caries in children.

Key words: [Dental caries](#), [Finger-sucking](#), [Pacifier](#), [Japanese infant](#), [Longitudinal study](#)



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To cite this article:

Takuro Yonezu and Masashi Yakushiji: "Longitudinal Study on Influence of Prolonged Non-nutritive Sucking Habits on Dental Caries in Japanese Children from 1.5 to 3 Years of Age". The Bulletin of Tokyo Dental College, Vol. **49**: 59-63 (2008) .

doi:10.2209/tdcpublication.49.59

JOI JST.JSTAGE/tdcpublication/49.59

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