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A study on non-nutritive sucking habits in young Japanese children —Relationships among incidence, duration, malocclusion and nursing behavior—

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Abstract Purpose: The purpose of the present study was to investigate the non-nutritive sucking habits of 18-month-old and 42-month-old children in order to determine the best method of advice to stop sucking habits.

Method: We examined the present situation of oral habits, the time of commencement and the time of discontinuation of the habits, the condition of occlusion, and the nursing behavior during the first 3 months from birth in the subjects.

Results: The incidences of finger sucking and pacifier sucking habits in the 18-month-old children were 25.6% and 16.9%, respectively, and the incidences of the habits in the 42-month-old children were 27.2% and 16.8%, respectively. Most cases of the finger sucking habit continued until after 3 years of age, but the pacifier sucking habit was discontinued before 42 months of age. Open bite or maxillary protrusion was found in 70.7% of the 42-month-old children with persistent non-nutritive sucking habits but in only 6.8% of the 42-month-old participating children who had broken their sucking habits. We examined the correlation between non-nutritive sucking habits and nursing behavior. The incidence of oral habits was significantly higher in bottle-fed children than in breast-fed children. Pacifier sucking was more prevalent in children with a short breast feeding duration than in children with a normal feeding duration.

Conclusion: The incidence of finger sucking is higher than that of pacifier sucking in Japan. Malocclusion caused by a sucking habit is more frequent in pacifier suckers than in finger suckers. The incidence of oral habits is higher in bottle-fed children than in breast-fed children.

Key words Finger sucking, Malocclusion, Nursing behavior, Pacifier sucking, Sucking

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