

FACTORS INFLUENCING THE DEVELOPMENT OF EARLY CHILDHOOD CARIES

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Introduction. Early childhood caries affects millions of children each year. The frequency of this condition is increasing, and the most disadvantaged children are those who come from low socio-economic families. There is a limited understanding of the interaction of parental knowledge and behavioral and socioeconomic factors that influence the onset of this condition.

Aim of the study. Analysis of socio-economic and behavioral factors related to oral and food hygiene and their relationship with the development of early childhood caries.

Material and methods. A group of 620 patients aged 2 to 6 years was selected and referred to the University Dental Clinic. The children were examined and the value of the index of frequency and activity of dental caries was calculated. A questionnaire for parents was used to collect data on the socio-economic characteristics of patients and their families and the behavioral factors of oral and food hygiene.

Key words: early childhood caries, risk factors, prevalence of dental caries, intensity of dental caries.

Results. There was a direct relationship between low socioeconomic status and the intensity of early childhood caries in children ($p=0.04$). The intensity of dental caries was also directly related to the parents' behaviors related to the child's oral hygiene and food hygiene ($p < 0.01$).

Conclusion. Socio-economic status is directly related to poor oral hygiene behaviors and cariogenic nutrition. These in turn were related to a higher frequency and intensity of early childhood caries.

