

# Integration of Primary Dental Prevention into Well-baby Program: Marshall Islands

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- **Objective:** Marshallese children have a high level of Early Childhood Caries. The purpose of this pilot study was to compare the dental health of children who received anticipatory guidance and preventive services at a well baby clinic from 2 to 12 months of age with children who did not receive these services.
- **Methods:** A dental preventive assistant saw each child and mother in the pilot study group at the well-baby clinic on scheduled immunization days at 6, 9, and 12 months of age. The mothers received dental health education and topical PVP-Iodine (1% iodine, Allegiance, Cardinal Health, USA) and fluoride varnish (5% sodium fluoride, Varnish America, USA) were applied sequentially to the children's teeth. Participants were provided toothbrushes and fluoridated toothpaste (My First Colgate, Australia, .304% sodium MFP for the children) with instructions to begin brushing the children's teeth as soon as they erupted. Children in both the pilot study and the comparison groups were examined at 15 months (range 14–16) of age by a single trained examiner with a mouth mirror and ambient light using WHO criteria.
- **Results:** All 108 children (M:F=1:1.2) in the pilot study group were treated at least twice (mean number of visits including education visits = 3.2, range = 2 to 5). Comparison group children (M:F=1:1.1) received no services. The average age (mos) of the 2 groups was the same (15 .5). Pilot group children 100% caries free versus 82% (113/138) for the comparison group ( $X^2=280$ , df 4,  $p<.001$ ). The mean (SD) number of decayed teeth among the children in the comparison group was 0.86 (1.9), range 0 to 10.
- **Conclusion:** We conclude that this pilot project was able to provide anticipatory guidance on oral hygiene and fluoride toothpaste and also deliver preventive services to very young children at a well-baby clinic, resulting in a reduction of Early Childhood Caries.

