

# HKU Faculty of Dentistry gives tips on preventing childhood tooth decay

Two researchers from the Discipline of Paediatric Dentistry at the HKU Faculty of Dentistry are urging local dentists to boost efforts to prevent tooth decay (dental caries) among children in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, and offer some practical guidelines.

Writing in the June 2011 issue of the *Hong Kong Dental Journal* (article available at: <[http://www.hkda.org/hkdj/V8/N1/v8n1\\_p29\\_RA1.pdf](http://www.hkda.org/hkdj/V8/N1/v8n1_p29_RA1.pdf)>), Dr Cynthia KY Yiu and Prof Nigel King note that tooth decay, despite being preventable, is still very common in Hong Kong's children, especially among preschoolers and among socially disadvantaged children. Quoted rates of the presence of any dental caries in Hong Kong children aged 3 to 5 years range from 31% to 51%.

Dr Yiu and Prof King advise dentists to conduct routine caries risk assessments for children and to tailor preventive methods according to risk. To assist in risk assessment, they provide a pair of tables – one for 0- to 5-year-olds and one for 6- to 12-year-olds – listing biological, protective, and clinical factors to be considered, as recommended by the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry. Furthermore, after reviewing the published evidence on the usefulness of available caries-preventive methods, the two researchers provide a further pair of tables summarising the effectiveness of methods according to caries risk level, again for 0- to 5-year-olds and for 6- to 12-year-olds.

According to the findings, there was insufficient evidence for caries prevention among children by the professional application of chlorhexidine varnish. In contrast, fluoride varnish and fissure sealants are effective, and their frequency of use depends on caries risk. The most important approaches, the report concludes, are “daily use of fluoride toothpaste, proper dietary control, and regular professional care.”

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**Source:** Yiu CKY, King NM. An overview of dental caries-preventive approaches for children. *Hong Kong Dental Journal* 2011;8:29-39. Journal site link: [http://www.hkda.org/hkdj/V8/N1/v8n1\\_p29\\_RA1.pdf](http://www.hkda.org/hkdj/V8/N1/v8n1_p29_RA1.pdf)

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