



British Dental Association response to the consultation on the SACN draft report *Feeding in the first year of life*

The British Dental Association (BDA) is the professional association and trade union for dentists practising in the UK. BDA members are engaged in all aspects of dentistry including general practice, salaried primary care dental services, the armed forces, hospitals, academia and research, and includes dental students.

The BDA welcomes this detailed evidence review by SACN. We are pleased to note the inclusion of oral health as a key consideration for general health and wellbeing, and the recognition of the important bi-directional relationship between infant feeding and oral health.

In relation to Chapter 9 and the associated recommendations, the BDA would like to make the following specific comments:

354. It is worth noting that childhood dental decay also places a substantial strain on GP services and A&E departments.^{1,2} Furthermore, recent surveys by the BDA have shown that a quarter of parents are unaware that children are entitled to free NHS dental care;³ this is likely to contribute to the pressure on non-dental health professionals and also to the socio-economic inequalities in children's oral health.

358. Poor oral hygiene practices may also be a factor.

363. New evidence suggests that maternal smoking during pregnancy could also affect tooth development.⁴

365. Some babies are routinely bottle fed with expressed breast milk; we would urge SACN to clarify the distinction between the mode of delivery (breast or bottle) and the type of milk provided (breast milk or formula). As noted in paragraph 367, there is evidence that constituents of breast milk inhibit growth and adhesion of cariogenic bacteria; this seems likely to be independent of the mode of delivery. It may be the case that further research is needed to separate the effects of the variables.

369. Is there evidence to support the suggestion that formula-fed infants might be more likely to be given sugar-sweetened beverages in a bottle than those who are breastfed, or those fed expressed breast milk in a bottle?

381-389. As above, the distinction between mode of feeding and type of milk needs to be clarified. Are mixed-fed infants more likely than those purely bottle-fed to receive expressed breast milk rather than formula?

1. Cope, A.L. *et al.* (2016) Dental consultations in UK general practice and antibiotic prescribing rates: a retrospective cohort study. *Br. J. Gen. Pract.*
2. Currie, C.C. *et al.* (2011) Dental pain in the medical emergency department: a cross-sectional study. *J. Oral Rehabilitation.*
3. <https://www.bda.org/news-centre/press-releases/Documents/a-tax-on-teeth.pdf>
4. Al-Ani, A.H. *et al.* (2017) Maternal smoking during pregnancy is associated with offspring hypodontia. *J. Dent. Res.*

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