

It's High Time to "Play Safe" with the Child

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In children, dental caries is particularly critical because even following repair; destroyed tooth structure exhibits increased vulnerability. Furthermore, poor oral health impacts children's development. Toddlers may exhibit poor growth and nutrition when chewing is painful. Older children may miss school days or be distracted due to dental pain.^[1]

We need to "Play SAFE" in designing measures to curb the menace of caries and its sequel in the young population. A tabulated form of all the possible measures to limit the burden of this disease at both individual and population levels is presented for the 1st time with the mnemonics in Table 1.

Table 1: Alok's "SAFE" strategies for caries control

S	Sealant application ^[2] Stabilizing caries by interim therapeutic restorations ^[3] Salivary stimulation and buffering by xylitol-chewing gums ^[4] "SMART" preventive and restorative materials ^[5] Sugar-free medicines for chronically ill children ^[6] Superior social determinants of health ^[7]
A	Antimicrobial (chlorhexidine mouthwash) ^[8] Arresting caries (remineralizing pastes) ^[9] Assessing caries risk indicators ^[10] Anticipatory guidance in infant oral health ^[11] Age at commencement of brushing ^[12] Altering tooth structure (fluoride, SDF, Co ₂ lasers) ^[13-15]
F	Fluoride ^[13] Flossing ^[16] Frequency and duration of brushing ^[16] Futuristic approach (replacement therapy with probiotics and caries vaccine) ^[17,18]
E	Eliminating "sugar attack" ^[19] Effective diet counseling ^[20] Educating and making aware of oral health problems ^[20]

These preventive measures go well with the mnemonics "SAFE." Hence, these strategies, in tabulated form, will help the undergraduate and postgraduates students and practicing dentists in memorizing and refreshing their knowledge of the preventive measures that can be undertaken.

"SAFE" strategies for caries control can also be displayed in community health camps in making the common people aware of the facilities available in primary health centers to prevent tooth decay in their children.

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