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## Policy on the Role of Dental Prophylaxis in Pediatric Dentistry

Originating Committee

Clinical Affairs Committee

Review Council

Council on Clinical Affairs

Adopted

1986

Reaffirmed

1996

Revised

1993, 2000, 2003, 2007, 2012, 2017

### Purpose

The American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry (AAPD) presents this policy to provide assist-  
practitioners in determining the indications and methods for dental prophylaxis including removal of  
tooth deposits, as well as facilitating patient education and clinical examination.

### Methods

This policy is an update of the previous document adopted in 1986 and last revised in 2007<sup>12</sup>. The  
revision included a new systematic literature search of electronic databases (PubMed® and Google  
Scholar) using the terms dental prophylaxis, toothbrushing, professional tooth cleaning, fluoride  
uptake, and professional dental prophylaxis, in limited to children, the last 10 years, and English  
language and was followed by hand searches. Papers for review were chosen from a list of 22 relevant  
articles. When data did not appear sufficient or were inconclusive, recommendations were based upon  
Expert and/or consensus opinion by experienced researchers and clinicians was also considered.

### Background

There term “dental prophylaxis” encompasses several techniques that are several approaches used by  
that dentists and dental hygienists dental personnel use to professionally to remove plaque, stain, and  
calculus from patients’ teeth. The toothbrush prophylaxis is a procedure wherein primarily a Often the  
toothbrush and toothpaste (i.e., toothbrush coronal polish) rather than prophylaxis is a procedure that

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~~is-are~~ used to remove plaque from tooth surfaces and demonstrate brushing techniques to caregivers for young children, and for patients with special needs who cannot tolerate the use of a rubber cup<sup>1</sup>. The rubber cup prophylaxis-coronal polish is a procedure in which ~~primarily~~ a dental polishing paste is applied to tooth surfaces with a rotary rubber cup or rotary bristle brushes to remove plaque and stains from teeth<sup>2</sup>. Dental scaling is a procedure in which ~~ultrasonic or hand or ultrasonic~~ instruments are used to remove ~~dental~~ calculus and stain. Full mouth debridement may be necessary as a preliminary treatment for those ~~who are not able to perform daily toothbrushing~~ whose medical, psychological, physical, or periodontal condition result in calculus accumulation beyond the scope of routine prophylaxis. ~~By cleaning the tooth surfaces through these various approaches, the dental prophylaxis also~~ These procedures facilitates the clinical examination and introduces dental procedures to the patient~~child~~. Additionally, the accompanying preventive visit demonstrates proper oral hygiene methods to the patient and/or caregiver. Flossing is an important part of the prophylaxis that removes interproximal and subgingival plaque while being used to aid in educating the patient and facilitating the oral examination. The benefits of ~~various~~ prophylaxis options are shown in the ~~Table~~ below.

~~An historical reason for routine rubber cup prophylaxis at preventive visits was the belief that it was necessary before topical fluoride application (Knutson 1948). Over the years, there have been numerous~~ Numerous reports showing have shown plaque and pellicle are not a barrier to fluoride uptake in enamel and, consequently, there is no evidence of a difference in caries rates or fluoride uptake in subjects who receive rubber cup prophylaxis-coronal polish or a toothbrush prophylaxis-coronal polish before fluoride treatment<sup>3,4</sup> (Ripa 1984).

~~The potential for abrasives causing tooth wear and loss of the fluoride rich zone of enamel gained attention in the late 1960s and 1970s (Stookey 1978; Biller 1980) and has been cited as a consideration for decreasing the need for pumice prophylaxis. As a result of these findings, the selective polishing procedure (Darby 2010) and the toothbrush prophylaxis procedure have gained popularity. Selective polishing procedures involve individual evaluation of each patient so that only specific teeth that have indications (eg, stain) receive a rubber cup pumice prophylaxis. The toothbrush prophylaxis has gained acceptance in the professional and the dental insurance industry as a way to remove plaque, provide oral hygiene education, and facilitate the clinical examination. The clinician should select the least aggressive technique that fulfills the goals of the procedure and minimizes the loss of enamel.~~

A patient's risk for caries/periodontal disease, as determined by the patient's dental provider, should help determine the interval of the prophylaxis or periodontal maintenance. An individualized preventive plan increases the probability of good oral health by demonstrating proper oral hygiene methods and techniques. In addition, and removing plaque, stain, calculus, and the factors that influence their buildup increases the probability of good oral health. Patients who exhibit higher risk for developing caries and/or periodontal disease should have recall visits at more frequent intervals<sup>5,6</sup> ~~more frequent than every six months.~~

## Policy Statement

Professional prophylaxis is indicated to:

- Instruct the caregiver and child or adolescent in proper oral hygiene techniques.
- Remove ~~dental-microbial~~ plaque, extrinsic stain, and calculus deposits from the teeth.
- Facilitate the examination of hard and soft tissues.
- Introduce dental procedures to the ~~young child and apprehensive~~ patient.
- ~~Assess patient cooperation.~~

A patient's risk for caries/periodontal disease helps determine the interval for recall. Those who exhibit higher risks should have recall visits more frequently than every six months.

## References

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**Table. BENEFITS OF PROPHYLAXIS OPTIONS**

	<b>Plaque removal</b>	<b>Stain removal</b>	<b>Calculus removal</b>	<b>Education of patient/parent</b>	<b>Facilitate examination</b>
<b>Toothbrush</b>	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes
<b>Rubber cup</b>	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
<b>Hand instruments</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Ultrasonic scalers</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Flossing</b>	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes