

Cerebral palsy and oral health.

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Cerebral palsy (CP) is a common chronic motor disorder with associated cognitive, communicative, and seizure disorders. Besides, CP is the most frequent condition treated by rehabilitators of the infant neurological area.¹ In line with this, the participation of a dental professional is extremely important in the rehabilitation and integration of these patients in the social environment.²

Studies have shown that the more severe the neurological insult is in children with CP, the higher is the risk of dental disease. Many factors lead to these, from motor and coordination difficulties, as well as limited oral care and hygiene. The factors predisposing to dental disease include motor weakness or lack of coordination, cognitive impairment, pseudo-bulbar palsy, gastroesophageal reflux disease and, in some cases, malnutrition.

Alterations in posture and movement in CP generates poor coordination of movements for carrying out the technique of tooth brushing, an aspect that is augmented when there is moderate or severe cognitive impairment. In this cases, the children with CP are assisted by their parents or caretakers. Pseudo-bulbar palsy affects the coordination of sucking, chewing, and swallowing, as well as resulting in excessive drooling or sialorrhea.³

Gastroesophageal reflux disease causing regurgitation, vomiting, and possible aspiration affects the dental health of the patients. Malnutrition⁴ was well as medications taken by that children with CP (for epilepsy) directly affect dental health and promote caries. These factors can lead to different oral diseases that are common among children with CP: dental caries, gingival hyperplasia, dental erosion, bruxism, temporomandibular joint (TMJ) disorders and malocclusion.

Although each of these conditions are defined and usually cared for by dental professionals, we must be strive that the care given to these patients happens in an integrated way (physical therapy, psychology, speech therapy, neurology, dentistry, nursing, and occupational therapy) with the patients' well-being as the ultimate goal.

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