




## SCHOOL ORAL HEALTH PROMOTION STRATEGIES AND PREVENTION OF CHILDHOOD ORAL DISEASES

### ESTRATÉGIAS DE PROMOÇÃO DE SAÚDE BUCAL ESCOLAR E PREVENÇÃO DE AGRAVOS NA INFÂNCIA

### ESTRATEGIAS DE PROMOCIÓN DE LA SALUD BUCAL ESCOLAR Y PREVENCIÓN DE ENFERMEDADES EN LA INFANCIA

 <https://doi.org/10.56238/isevmjv5n3-012>

Receipt of originals: 04/23/2026

Acceptance for publication: 05/23/2026

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#### ABSTRACT

Oral health in childhood is a cornerstone of quality of life; however, the high prevalence of conditions such as dental caries, periodontal diseases, and traumatic injuries requires comprehensive and multisectoral preventive strategies. This study consists of a narrative literature review which, based on evidence from PubMed over the last five years, sought to systematize oral health promotion strategies in the school environment and the mitigation of childhood oral health problems. The results highlight schools and families as central pillars for effective programs. Successful interventions go beyond the passive transmission of information by adopting behavioral approaches, such as Motivational Interviewing and Health Coaching, to promote autonomy and the consolidation of lasting healthy habits. Effectiveness is supported by systematic regional programs and by the use of tools such as the "Passport for Healthy Teeth," which demonstrated protection of permanent dentition into adulthood. The study emphasizes the importance of integrating oral health into prenatal care, involving non-dental health professionals in parental education, and using technologies such as teledentistry for the rapid management of emergencies, including dental trauma. It is concluded that the sustainability of children's oral health requires continuous investment in public policies and integrated care models that address the entire life cycle.

**Keywords:** Oral Health Promotion. School Health. Childhood. Motivational Interviewing. Teledentistry.

#### RESUMO

A saúde bucal na infância é um pilar da qualidade de vida, porém, a alta prevalência de agravos como cárie, doenças periodontais e traumatismos exige estratégias preventivas abrangentes e multi-setoriais. Este trabalho constitui uma revisão bibliográfica narrativa que, com base em evidências do PubMed dos últimos cinco anos, buscou sistematizar as estratégias de promoção de saúde bucal no ambiente escolar e a mitigação de danos na infância. Os resultados destacam a escola e a família como eixos centrais para programas eficazes. Intervenções bem-sucedidas superam a transmissão passiva de informações, adotando abordagens comportamentais, como a Entrevista Motivacional e

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o Health Coaching, para promover a autonomia e a consolidação de hábitos saudáveis duradouros. A eficácia é corroborada por programas regionais sistemáticos e pelo uso de ferramentas como o "Passaporte para Dentes Saudáveis", que demonstraram proteger a dentição permanente na fase adulta. A pesquisa enfatiza a importância da integração da saúde bucal no cuidado pré-natal, o envolvimento de profissionais de saúde não dentistas na educação dos pais, e o uso de tecnologias como a teleodontologia para o manejo ágil de urgências como o traumatismo dentário. Conclui-se que a sustentabilidade da saúde oral infantil requer o investimento contínuo em políticas públicas e modelos de cuidado integrado que abordem o ciclo de vida completo.

**Palavras-chave:** Promoção de Saúde Bucal. Saúde Escolar. Infância. Entrevista Motivacional. Teleodontologia.

## RESUMEN

La salud bucal en la infancia es un pilar de la calidad de vida; sin embargo, la alta prevalencia de afecciones como caries, enfermedades periodontales y traumatismos exige estrategias preventivas integrales y multisectoriales. Este trabajo consiste en una revisión bibliográfica narrativa que, basada en evidencias de PubMed de los últimos cinco años, buscó sistematizar las estrategias de promoción de la salud bucal en el entorno escolar y la mitigación de daños en la infancia. Los resultados destacan a la escuela y a la familia como ejes centrales para programas eficaces. Las intervenciones exitosas superan la transmisión pasiva de información mediante la adopción de enfoques conductuales, como la Entrevista Motivacional y el Health Coaching, para promover la autonomía y la consolidación de hábitos saludables duraderos. La eficacia está respaldada por programas regionales sistemáticos y por el uso de herramientas como el "Pasaporte para Dientes Saludables", que demostraron proteger la dentición permanente en la edad adulta. La investigación enfatiza la importancia de integrar la salud bucal en la atención prenatal, involucrar a profesionales de la salud no odontológicos en la educación de los padres y utilizar tecnologías como la teleodontología para el manejo ágil de urgencias, como el traumatismo dental. Se concluye que la sostenibilidad de la salud oral infantil requiere una inversión continua en políticas públicas y modelos de atención integrada que aborden todo el ciclo de vida.

**Palabras clave:** Promoción de la Salud Bucal. Salud Escolar. Infancia. Entrevista Motivacional. Teleodontología.



## 1 INTRODUCTION

Oral health is recognized as a fundamental element of quality of life, manifesting itself in the ability to chew, speak, and smile without limitations (Sirsch et al., 2022). In childhood, the prevalence of conditions such as dental caries, periodontal diseases, fluorosis, and dental trauma remains high, requiring targeted preventive approaches (Alyafei et al., 2024). The promotion of school oral health is based on the development of public policies, the creation of favorable environments, and the strengthening of personal skills from the early stages of life (Takehara et al., 2023). Strategies such as the use of "dental passports" and educational programs in schools have been shown to be effective in reducing affected deciduous and permanent teeth, reinforcing the importance of longitudinal follow-up (Takehara et al., 2023; Alyafei et al., 2024). In addition, the integration of oral health into antenatal care is vital, since unfavorable beliefs of pregnant women can negatively impact access to preventive treatments and the child's future oral health status (Kamalabadi et al., 2023). In the face of disparities in access and the need for health literacy, multidisciplinary management and the use of technologies such as teledentistry for trauma emerge as crucial tools in the prevention of childhood injuries (Goettems, 2022).

## 2 METHODOLOGY

The present work is a narrative literature review, structured with the aim of examining and systematizing contemporary scientific evidence about oral health promotion strategies in the school environment and the mitigation of harm in childhood. Data mining was carried out by consulting the PubMed database, using the descriptors "Oral Health" and "Health Promotion", which were operationalized through the use of the logical connectors AND and OR, in strict accordance with the structured vocabulary of the Medical Subject Headings (MeSH). The inclusion of academic productions published in the last five years, made available in full and written in Portuguese or English, which had direct adherence to the central theme, was delimited. Duplicate studies, narrative reviews with low methodological rigor, and articles not indexed on the aforementioned platform were discarded. The selection process was structured in two distinct phases: the preliminary screening of titles and abstracts, followed by the full scrutiny of the texts to ratify their relevance. The consolidation of the findings followed a descriptive and systematic organization.



### 3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of recent evidence highlights that the school and the family are the central pillars for the implementation of effective oral health promotion programs (Alyafei et al., 2024). According to Kamalabadi et al. (2023), pregnant women are more likely to adhere to oral hygiene interventions due to the direct impact that these measures have on the health of the fetus and newborn. For this reason, the gestational period is considered the most appropriate time to promote positive behavioral changes in women.

#### 3.1 SCHOOL AND REGIONAL INTERVENTION PROGRAMS

Several nations have implemented systematic protocols to address the challenges of children's oral health. Programs such as "Asnani" in Qatar and the National School Oral Health Program in Kuwait have established education and prevention models that include instruction in correct oral hygiene, promotion of healthy eating habits, and regular dental visits (Alyafei et al., 2024). In addition, according to experiences carried out in Bahrain, it has been observed that the use of social networks, through community engagement, is capable of increasing awareness of oral health (Alyafei et al., 2024).

In Japan, the use of the "Passport to Healthy Teeth" under the 8020 campaign showed that users of this tool had a lower incidence of cavities in permanent first molars compared to non-users, showing that interventions in childhood protect the dentition in adulthood (Takehara et al., 2023). According to the principles of the 8020 Campaign, the preservation of at least 20 functional teeth until the age of 80 is associated with the maintenance of chewing capacity, adequate nutrition, and quality of life in aging (Takehara et al., 2023).

From this perspective, according to Takehara et al. (2023), the Pan American Health Organization, based on the experiences of several international campaigns, has sought to strengthen oral health services through its Oral Health Program, directing special attention to the most vulnerable populations. In a complementary way, the World Federation of Dentistry has developed a roadmap with possible strategies for achieving a healthy and aging society. However, the effectiveness and sustainability of these large-scale policies depend crucially on the adoption of intervention methodologies that promote autonomy and active behavior change in individuals.



### 3.2 BEHAVIORAL APPROACHES AND HEALTH LITERACY

The sustainability of childhood behavior changes is not achieved with passive information provision alone (Chunda et al., 2023). The use of Motivational Interviewing and *Health Coaching* has been shown to be superior to traditional didactic methods, as it focuses on the autonomy of the child and caregivers, using personalized messages to overcome hygiene barriers (Chunda et al., 2023). Training non-dental health professionals, such as nurses and pediatricians, to identify needs and educate parents is essential to strengthen the oral health support network (Sirsch et al., 2022; Alyafei et al., 2024). Health promotion programs that encourage the active participation of children and guardians also have better results in consolidating healthy habits throughout childhood (Goettems, 2022; Takehara et al., 2023).

### 3.3 PREVENTION OF DISEASES AND SPECIAL GROUPS

The management of diseases requires attention to specific populations. Children with special needs, such as those with autism spectrum disorder or congenital heart defects, require adapted educational and preventive strategies (Alyafei et al., 2024). For urgent care, such as dental trauma, teledentistry has been explored as an avenue to facilitate immediate communication between doctors and dentists in children's hospitals, improving the prognosis of affected teeth (Goettems, 2022). Finally, combating myths during pregnancy, such as the idea that the baby "absorbs calcium from the mother's teeth", is crucial to ensure that maternal oral health is maintained, preventing odontogenic infections that can compromise the well-being of the newborn (Kamalabadi et al., 2023).

## 4 CONCLUSION

This literature review reiterates the need for comprehensive and multi-sectoral strategies for the promotion of oral health and prevention of childhood injuries. The findings consolidate the school and the family as the central pillars for the execution of effective programs. Successful interventions transcend the mere passive transmission of information, adopting behavioral approaches, such as Motivational Interviewing and *Health Coaching*, which demonstrate superiority by fostering autonomy and the consolidation of lasting healthy habits.

Effectiveness is reinforced by systematic regional programs and the use of tools such as the "Passport to Healthy Teeth", which protects the permanent dentition in



adulthood. It is also crucial to involve non-dental health professionals, such as nurses and pediatricians, in the training and education of parents, strengthening the support network.

In addition, the management of diseases and the care of special groups, such as children with adapted needs, require particular attention. Technological tools such as teledentistry are essential to streamline communication in emergency cases, such as dental trauma, improving the prognosis. Finally, the integration of oral health into prenatal care, by combating unfavorable beliefs, is vital for maternal and newborn well-being. The sustainability of children's oral health depends on continued investment in public policies and integrated care models that address the full life cycle.

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