

69th World Health Assembly

Agenda Item: 12.1: Maternal, infant and young child nutrition

A69/7, A69/7 Add.1, A69/7 Add.2

Action by the Health Assembly (clause 37): The Health Assembly is invited to note the report.

Honourable Chair, Distinguished Delegates,

FDI World Dental Federation is the voice of over one million dentists worldwide. We would like to remind Member States that WHO has made valuable contributions to the issue of nutrition and oral health. We believe that some of WHO's statements could be usefully included in any further secretariat reports on maternal, infant and young child nutrition.

For example, as regards the merits of breastfeeding:

"Early childhood caries is caused by frequent and prolonged exposure of the teeth to sugar and is often the result of a child going to bed with a bottle of a sweetened drink or drinking at will from a bottle during the day."

As dentists, we believe there should be a concerted, integrated effort of parents, schools, health ministries and other stakeholders to decrease the intake of sugar in all its forms. Free sugars are the primary dietary factor responsible for dental caries. Sugars induce the proliferation of cariogenic bacteria and their metabolism results in acids that cause demineralization of enamel and dentin. This initiates the pathological process, which leads to caries. Each additional 5 grams of sugars intake has been associated with an increase in the probability of developing caries.

We therefore strongly encourage governments to:



- Implement the WHO Guideline on sugars intake for adults and children through national and local food policies, including fiscal and legislative measures;
- Adopt free sugars consumption as a central element of an integrated food policy;
- Focus caries prevention strategies on individual- and population-based approaches to reduce free sugars consumption in general, particularly consumption of sugars-sweetened beverages, across all stages of the life course;
- Urgently introduce tighter and enforceable controls on the advertising, promotion and labelling of food and drinks containing free sugars, especially those targeting children and young adults.

WHO statements

http://www.who.int/oral_health/action/risks/en/

http://www.who.int/oral_health/publications/diet/en/