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Dental caries and preterm birth: A systematic review and meta-analysis

Journal:	<i>BMJ Open</i>
Manuscript ID	bmjopen-2017-018556
Article Type:	Research
Date Submitted by the Author:	07-Jul-2017
Complete List of Authors:	Wagle, Madhu; Universitetet i Tromso Helsevitenskapelige fakultet Helsefak, Department of Clinical Medicine D'Antonio, Francesco; Universitetet i Tromso Helsevitenskapelige fakultet Helsefak, Department of Clinical Medicine Reierth, Eirik; University of Tromso, Science and Health Library Basnet, Purusotam; Universitetet i Tromso Helsevitenskapelige fakultet Helsefak, Department of Clinical Medicine Trovik, Tordis; Universitetet i Tromso Helsevitenskapelige fakultet Helsefak, Department of Community Medicine Orsini, Giovanna; Universita Politecnica delle Marche, Department of Clinical Sciences and Stomatology Manzoli, Lamberto; University of Ferrara, Department of Medical Sciences Acharya, G; Karolinska Institutet, Center for Fetal Medicine; Universitetet i Tromso Helsevitenskapelige fakultet Helsefak, Department of Clinical Medicine
Primary Subject Heading:	Dentistry and oral medicine
Secondary Subject Heading:	Obstetrics and gynaecology
Keywords:	Dental caries, pregnancy, pregnant woman, risk, preterm birth, EPIDEMIOLOGY, PUBLIC HEALTH

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Title page**Dental caries and preterm birth:
A systematic review and meta-analysis**

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Word Count: Abstract- 186 words, Texts- 2203 words ,

Tables- 3

Figures- 3

Supplementary files- 2

ABSTRACT

Objectives: The primary objective of this systematic review was to explore the association between dental caries and preterm (PTB). The secondary objective was ascertaining the difference between women with dental caries who experienced PTB compared to those who did not with regards to decayed, missing, and filled teeth (DMFT) and decayed, missing, and filled surfaces (DMFS) indices.

Methods: Medline, Embase, Cinahl and Cochrane databases were searched up to March 2017. We included observational cohort and case-control studies. Random-effect meta-analyses were used to compute the summary odds ratio of PTB among women with caries versus women without caries, and the mean difference in either DMFT or DMFS indices between women experiencing PTB compared to those without PTB.

Results: Nine observational studies (4826 pregnancies) were included. Women affected by dental caries during pregnancy did not show a significantly higher risk of PTB (RR: 1.16, 95%CI: 0.90; 1.49, $p= 0.25$). Also, the women with PTB did not show significantly higher DMFT or DMFS indices (summary mean differences: 1.56, $p= 0.10$; and -0.15, $p= 0.9$, respectively).

Conclusion: Dental caries does not appear to be a substantial risk factor for PTB.

PROSPERO Registration number: CRD42017062573

Strengths and limitations of this study

- Strength of the study is its robust methodology. We tried to cover all available studies, access data quality and synthesize suitable data.
- Small number of cases in some of the included studies, their design, different follow-up periods and dissimilarity of the population studies are the limitations.
- Similarly, the lack of description or classification of dental caries stage is another limitation due to which the stratification of analysis according to the disease severity could not be performed.

Keywords: Dental caries, pregnancy, pregnant woman, risk, preterm birth.

INTRODUCTION

Preterm birth (PTB) is the major cause of perinatal mortality and morbidity in the developed countries, with an estimated incidence of 5-13%¹⁻⁴. Although advances in neonatal care have led to a reduction in the neonatal mortality rate, these infants remain at risk of developing a wide array of short and long-term complications such as respiratory, gastrointestinal and neurodevelopmental disabilities⁴.

Several risk factors have been associated with PTB; among these, intrauterine infection has emerged as one of the most important factors. Despite this, PTB cannot be considered a unique disease but rather a syndrome characterized by multiple etiology and in which different factors may play a peculiar role⁵.

Periodontal disease have been shown to carry an increased risk for PTB; the rationale for this assumption is based upon the fact that periodontitis may lead to maternal and fetal inflammation, thus triggering the common pathway of preterm parturition syndrome including increased uterine contractility, cervical ripening and decidua/membrane activation⁶⁻¹¹. Although dental caries, defined as a localized destruction of the tooth and its structure by the acidic by-product produced by the bacteria during the dietary carbohydrate fermentation¹², is one of the major oral health problems in developed countries, the effect of dental caries on pregnancy outcome have not been consistently explored. Pregnant women are more susceptible to dental caries and gingivitis compared to their non-pregnant counterparts¹³. Several studies reported that dental caries causing bacteria may have some influence on the pregnancy outcome as PTB and/or low birth weight, while in contrary, the other showed no association between these two factors^{14,15}.

The primary aim of this systematic review was to explore the association between dental caries and PTB; the secondary aim was to ascertain the differences in dental caries characteristics between women who deliver preterm compared to those who do not deliver preterm.

METHODOLOGY

Protocol, eligibility criteria, information sources and search

This review was performed according to an a-priori designed protocol and recommended for systematic reviews and meta-analysis^{16, 17}.

We developed a search strategy, and a systematic literature search was performed in the following databases: Ovid MEDLINE(R) (In-Process & Other Non-Indexed Citations, Ovid MEDLINE(R), Daily, Ovid MEDLINE(R) and Ovid OLDMEDLINE(R), Embase Classic+ (Ovid), The Web of Science® (Thomson Reuters) and The Cochrane Library (Wiley) and CINAHL Plus (EBSCOhost).

The full search was performed in November 2015 and repeated in December 2016. Supplementary material 1 shows the complete search string as it was performed in Medline. The controlled vocabulary of Medical Subject Headings (MeSH) from Medline, and the Emtree thesaurus from Embase, including sub-headings, were used when applicable. In addition, the search fields; title, abstract and key words, were searched when applicable. In The Web of Science, the search fields, title and topic were used. All references were exported to Endnote™ (x7.4 – Thomson Reuters), where duplicates were removed. There were no restrictions regarding languages or publication year for the searches.

Reference lists of relevant articles and reviews were hand searched for additional reports. Prisma guidelines were followed¹⁸.

The study was registered with the PROSPERO database (Registration number: CRD42017062573).

Study selection, data collection and data items

The primary outcome was the occurrence of PTB, defined as birth <37 weeks of gestation. We aimed to stratify the analysis according the type of PTB (spontaneous vs iatrogenic) and according to gestational age at birth (moderate to late preterm (<34 weeks), very preterm (<32 weeks) and extremely preterm <28 weeks)¹⁹.

The secondary outcome was to ascertain the difference between women with dental caries who experienced PTB compared to those who did not experience PTB in either decayed, missing, and filled teeth (DMFT) or decayed, missing, and filled surfaces (DMFS) indices²⁰.

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3 DMFT and DMFS indices are numerical expression of the caries prevalence of an individual or
4 groups and is widely used in epidemiological surveys of oral health. DMFT/DMFS is calculated
5 by adding up permanent teeth that are caries affected wherein D is for decay, M is missing due to
6 caries and F is filled teeth (T) or surfaces (S). If one tooth has filling as well as caries lesion, then
7 it is counted as D for DMFT index whereas filling+caries surface is counted as D but if there is F
8 on one and D in other surface, then they are counted differently for DMFS index. The anterior
9 teeth up to canine have 4 and pre-molars and molars teeth have 5 surfaces, respectively in DMFS
10 index. D+M+F = caries prevalence of an individual [maximum of 28 for DMFT and 128 for
11 DMFS, if 28 permanent teeth are included (excluding 4 wisdom molar teeth)]^{20, 21}.

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20 Studies were assessed according to the following criteria: population, outcome, gestational age at
21 birth and clinical characteristics of the caries during pregnancy.

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23 Two authors (MW, FD) reviewed all abstracts independently. Agreement regarding potential
24 relevance was reached by consensus; full text copies of those papers were obtained and the same
25 two reviewers independently extracted relevant data regarding study characteristics and
26 pregnancy outcome. Inconsistencies were discussed among the reviewers and consensus reached.
27 Any dispute was resolved by discussion with a third author. If more than one study was published
28 for the same cohort with identical endpoints, the report containing the most comprehensive
29 information on the population was included to avoid overlapping populations. For those articles
30 in which information was not reported but the methodology was such that this information would
31 have been recorded initially, the authors were contacted.

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39 Quality assessment of the included studies was performed using the Newcastle-Ottawa Scale
40 (NOS)²²; according to NOS, each study is judged on three broad perspectives: the selection of the
41 study groups; the comparability of the groups; and the ascertainment outcome of interest.
42 Assessment of the selection of a study includes the evaluation of the representativeness of the
43 exposed cohort, selection of the non-exposed cohort, ascertainment of exposure and the
44 demonstration that outcome of interest was not present at start of study. Assessment of the
45 comparability of the study includes the evaluation of the comparability of cohorts on the basis of
46 the design or analysis. Finally, the ascertainment of the outcome of interest includes the
47 evaluation of the type of the assessment of the outcome of interest, length and adequacy of
48 follow-up. According to NOS, a study can be awarded a maximum of one star for each numbered
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3 item within the Selection and Outcome categories. A maximum of two stars can be given for
4 Comparability²².

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6 Only full text articles were considered eligible for the inclusion. Case reports, conference
7 abstracts and case series with fewer than 3 cases were also excluded to avoid publication bias.
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10 ***Statistical analysis***

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12 A first random-effect meta-analysis of binary outcomes was used to compute the summary odds
13 ratio (and relative 95% confidence interval - CI) of preterm birth (PTB) among women with
14 caries versus women without caries (controls).
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17 Other two meta-analyses evaluated continuous outcomes: decayed, missing and filled teeth
18 (DMFT), and decayed, missing and filled surfaces (DMFS). As the included studies did not differ
19 in their outcome definitions, we used a random-effect approach to compute the mean difference
20 in either DMFT or DMFS between PTB and non-PTB. In one study by Martinez-Martinez, the
21 standard deviations were not available, and we thus conservatively used the largest values
22 recorded in the other included studies.
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27 For all meta-analyses, the heterogeneity across studies was quantified using I^2 statistic, and all
28 computations were made using Review Manager (RevMan), version 5.3 (Copenhagen: The
29 Nordic Cochrane Centre, The Cochrane Collaboration, 2014).
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RESULTS

General characteristics

A total of 1786 articles were identified, 20 were assessed with respect to their eligibility for inclusion (Supplementary Material 2) and 9 studies were included in the systematic review (Table 1, Figure 1). These 9 studies included 4826 pregnancies.

Results of quality assessment of the included studies using NOS for cohort studies are presented in Table 2. Most of the included studies showed an overall good rate about the selection and comparability of the study groups, and for the ascertainment of the outcome of interest. The main weaknesses of these studies were their retrospective design, small sample size with even smaller number of events (PTB) and different gestational ages at assessment.

Synthesis of the results

Five studies explored the risk of PTB in women who compared to those who did not have caries during pregnancy and reported that women affected by caries in pregnancy did not have an increased risk of delivering <37 weeks of gestation (RR: 1.16, 95% CI 0.90; 1.49, p= 0.25; I²: 34%). (Figure 2).

There was no difference in either DMFT (1.56, 95% CI -0.28; 3.41, p= 0.10) and DMFS (-0.15 (-3.40; 3.09, p= 0.9) (Table 3) (Figure 3).

Due to very small number of included cases and lack of information from the original study, it was not possible to perform any sub-analysis according to different gestational age at birth and type of PTB (spontaneous vs iatrogenic).

DISCUSSIONS

Summary of evidence

The findings from this systematic review showed that pregnant women with dental caries are not at increased risk for PTB. Furthermore, there was no difference in the mean DMFT and DMFS indices between women with dental caries who experienced PTB compared to those who did not.

Strength and limitations

The strength of this meta-analysis is its robust methodology. We tried to cover all available studies, assess the quality of the data and synthesize all suitable data.

The small number of cases in some of the included studies, their retrospective non-randomized design, different periods of follow-up, dissimilarity of the populations studied (due to various inclusion criteria) and lack of standardized criteria for the antenatal management of pregnancies with dental caries represent the major limitations of this systematic review. The lack of description or classification of caries stage in the studies included is another limitation of our review and it was not possible to stratify the analysis according to the severity of the disease. Assessment of the potential publication bias was also problematic because of the nature of the outcome evaluated (outcome rates with the left-side limited to a value of zero), which limits the reliability of funnel plots, and because of the small number of individual studies, which strongly limits the reliability of formal tests.

Implication for clinical practice

The consequences of overall oral health including the oral health in pregnant women is of a great concern²³. Dental caries and periodontal disease are the most common oral diseases worldwide. The higher prevalence of gingival alterations during pregnancy, especially bleeding during brushing, is a problem that is commonly encountered by pregnant women. Properly maintained oral hygiene care is known to have an impact on the oral health of pregnant women^{24, 25} and availability of free dental care also appears to influence this²⁶. Whereas in contrast, if proper oral hygiene is not maintained during pregnancy, the chances to develop oral health problems as enamel erosions, dental caries²⁷ and gingivitis increases.

There are no reports indicating that the incidence of dental caries increases during pregnancy, but it has been suggested that the chances of getting dental caries increases because of the change in

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3 diet, frequent snacking due to food craving and poor oral health²⁸. Furthermore, the prevalence of
4 dental caries seemed to be higher in older pregnant women²⁹. Despite the high caries prevalence
5 in most developed countries, very few studies have explored the potential association between
6 oral health and adverse pregnancy outcome.
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11 Identification of women at higher risk of PTB is fundamental to prevent the likelihood of
12 delivering preterm. Several risk factors as been associated with PTB, such as prior history of
13 PTB, cervical disease and infection. Despite this, finding an association between a given risk
14 factor and the occurrence of PTB is challenging.
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20 Dental caries is a frequently encountered oral health problem in pregnancy as pregnant women
21 are more susceptible to caries compared to non-pregnant women¹³. Being caused by an infectious
22 process, caries can theoretically lead to inflammation and thus increase the risk of PTB¹². Despite
23 this, we could not find any significant association between dental caries and PTB; furthermore,
24 we did not find any significant difference in the severity of caries assessed by DMFT and DMFS
25 indices between women who experienced PTB compared to those who did not.
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30 The lack of association between dental caries and PTB is difficult to explain. The initiation and
31 progression of the caries lesion is very slow and the destruction caused by caries in initial stage
32 can be reversible¹². In addition to this, pregnancy itself does not cause dental caries but it may
33 exacerbate the existing condition. Dental caries is symptomless until there is severe and
34 irreversible destruction of teeth³⁰. It might be possible that bacterial spreading during caries
35 formation and the subsequent production of pro-inflammatory mediators induced by oral
36 pathogens may not be of the magnitude to cause production of pro-inflammatory mediators
37 enough to initiate PTB.
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44 Even though we found no significant relationship between the dental caries and PTB, the risk of
45 transmitting the oral cariogenic flora from the mother to her infant and predisposing the infant to
46 dental caries in the future should not be neglected³¹⁻³⁴. Therefore, large prospective studies
47 aiming at ascertaining the association between dental caries and spontaneous PTB, according to
48 the gestational age at occurrence, severity of the disease and presence of other co-morbidities are
49 needed in order to elucidate the role, if any, of dental caries in increasing the risk of PTB.
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3 **TABLES**
4

5 **Table 1.** General characteristics of the included studies.
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7 Author	Year	Country	Period analyzed (y)	Study design	Gestational age at dental examination	Number of subject (n)	Definition of PTB
8 Martinez-Martinez	2016	Mexico	2013-2014	Retrospective	From the first trimester of pregnancy until 8 weeks postpartum	70	<37 weeks
9 Durand	2015	France	2005-2006	Prospective	Within 8 weeks after delivery	107	<37 weeks
10 Harjunmaa	2015	Malawi	2011-2013	Prospective	Within 6 weeks after delivery	1024	<37 weeks
11 Acharya	2013	India	2009	Retrospective	Within 1 day after delivery	316	<37 weeks
12 Vergnes	2011	France	2003-2006	Retrospective	Within 2–4 days post-partum	2201	<37 weeks
13 Ryalat	2011	Jordan	2009	Prospective	Within 1 week post-partum	200	<37 weeks
14 Heimonen	2008	Finland	2002-2004	Retrospective	Within 2 days post-partum	328	<37 weeks
15 Mumghamba	2007	Tanzania	NS	Retrospective	Within 40 days from delivery	373	<37 weeks
16 Meurman	2006	Finland	1998-2000	Retrospective	From the first trimester of pregnancy	207	<37 weeks

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Table 2. Quality assessment of the included studies according to Newcastle-Ottawa Scale (NOS) a study can be awarded a maximum of one star for each numbered item within the Selection and Outcome categories. A maximum of two stars can be given for Comparability.

Author	Year	Selection	Comparability	Outcome
Martinez-Martinez	2016	★★	★	★
Durand	2016	★★★	★★	★★
Harjunmaa	2015	★★	★	★
Acharya	2015	★★	★	★★
Vergnes	2015	★★★	★★	★
Ryalat	2015	★★★	★	★★
Heimonen	2014	★★	★	★
Mumghamba	2010	★★	★	★
Meurman	2009	★★	★	★

Table 3. Selected outcomes evaluating the association between caries and preterm birth.

Outcomes	N. studies (n/N)	Odds Ratio (95% CI)	p	I², %
Preterm birth (PTB), women with caries versus controls	5 (1472/4246)	1.16 (0.90; 1.49)	0.25	35
	N. studies (n/N)	Mean difference (95% CI)	p	I², %
DMFT (PTB versus Non-PTB)	5 (2963)	1.56 (-0.28; 3.41)	0.10	92
DMFS (PTB versus Non-PTB)	3 (2594)	-0.15 (-3.40; 3.09)	0.9	89

CI: Confidence interval. n: number of events. N: total number of participants. DMFT: Decayed, missed, and filled teeth. DMFS: Decayed, missed, and filled surface.

FIGURES

Figure 1. Systematic review flowchart

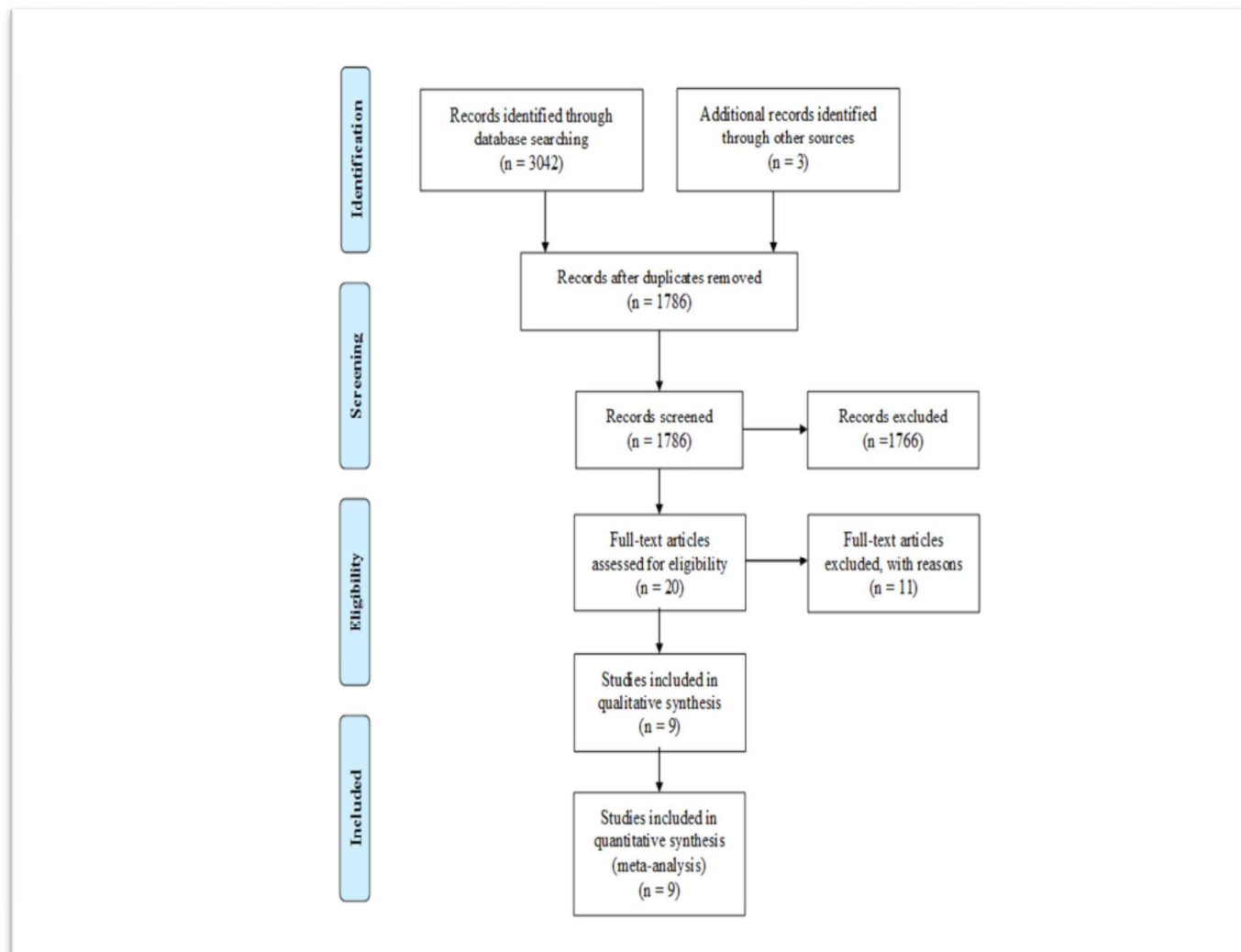
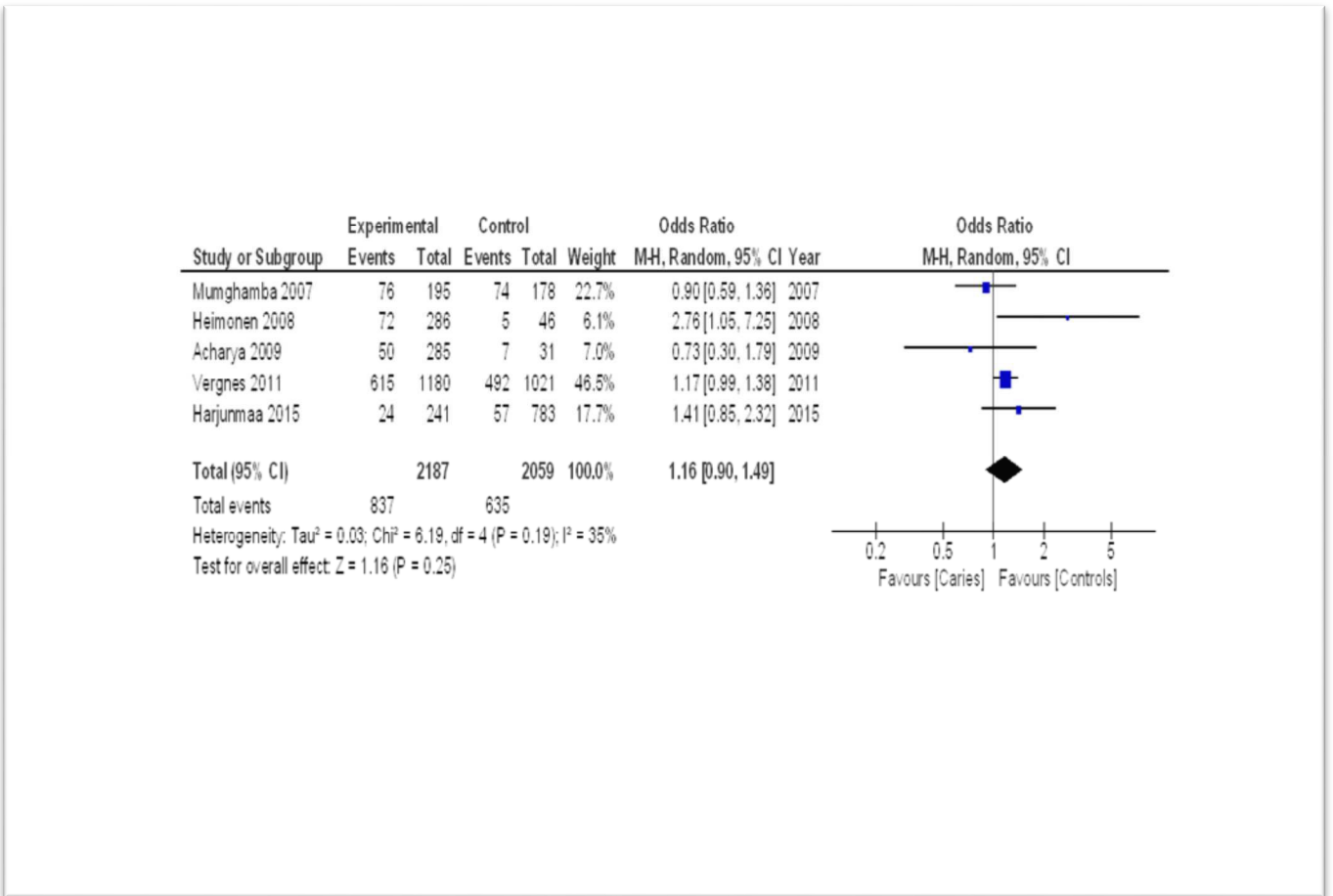
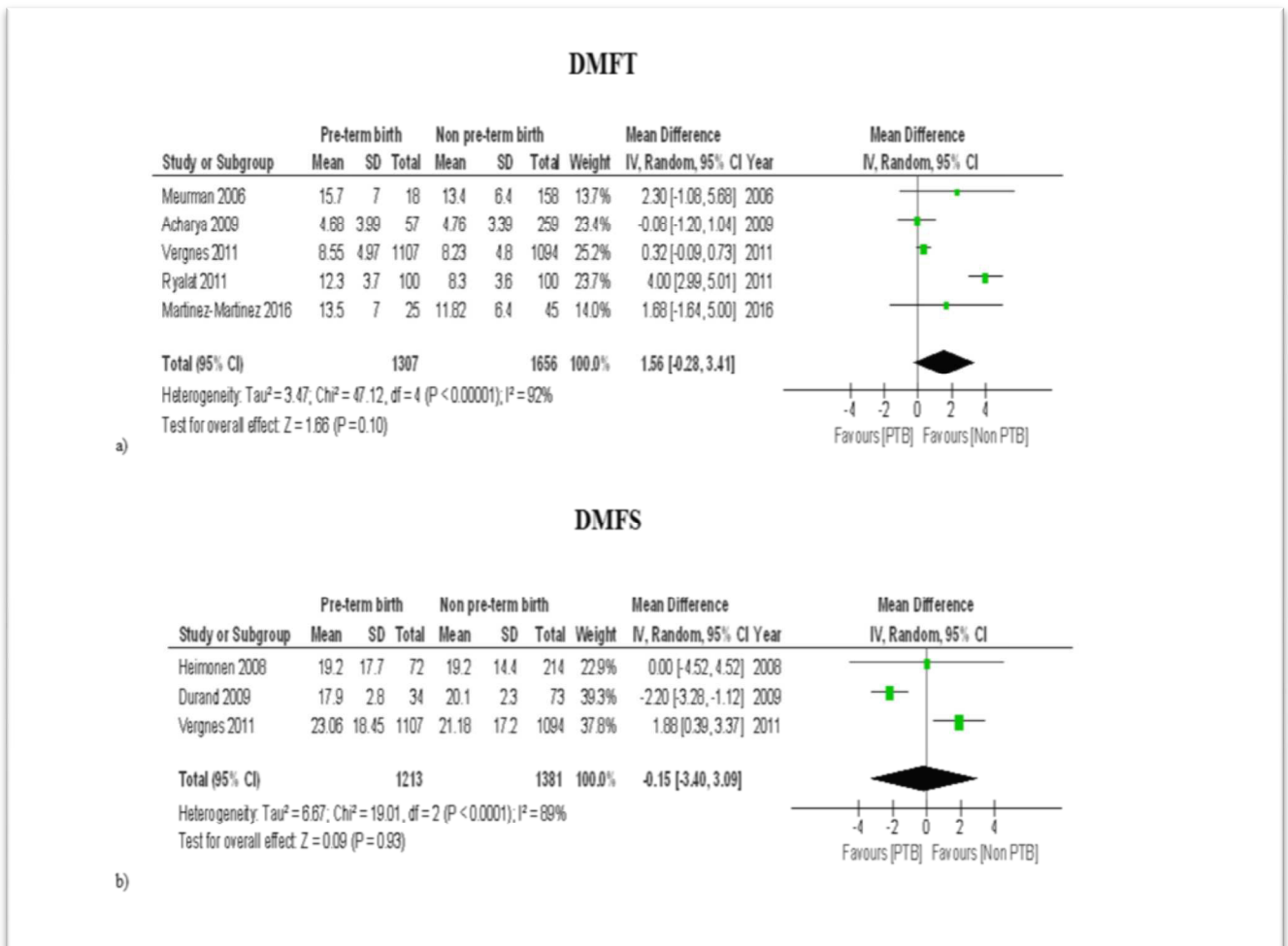


Figure 2. Pooled odd ratio (OR) for the risk of preterm birth (PTB) in women compared with those without caries.



Only

Figure 3. Mean differences in DMFT and DMFS indices in women with caries compared to those who did not experience PTB.



FUNDING

No funding was received for the conduction of this review.

The publication charges for this article have been funded by a grant from the publication fund of UiT The Arctic University of Norway.

CONTRIBUTORS

Study concept, design and methodology - MW, GA, FD'A, ER

Data Collection and entry - ER

Abstracts and articles review - MW, FD'A

Analysis and interpretation of data - F'DA, MW, GO, LM

Supervision - FD'A, GA, PB, TAT

Writing, review, critique, comments and revision of manuscript- MW, FD'A, ER, TAT, PB, GO, LM, GA

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We would sincerely like to thank Prof. S Acharya, Prof. S Abati, Prof. I Cetin, Prof. GG Campus, Prof. A Villa, Prof. R Martinez, Prof. S Ryalat, Prof. JH Meurman, Prof. Y Khader, Prof. A Heimonen, Prof. U Harjunmaa, Prof. R Durand, Prof. N Buduneli and Prof. AP Dasanayake for their co-operation and contribution by providing additional data and necessary information for this systemic review.

COMPETING INTERESTS

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

DATA SHARING STATEMENT

No additional data is available.

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ABBREVIATION

DMFS – Decayed, Missing, Filled Surface

DMFT- Decayed, Missing, Filled Teeth

NOS - Newcastle-Ottawa Scale

PTB – Preterm Birth

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Supplementary material 1



Supplementary Table 2. Excluded studies and reason for the exclusion.

Author	Year	Title	Reason for the exclusion
Saraiva	2007	Are intrauterine growth restriction and preterm birth associated with dental caries?	No data on caries in pregnancy
Shulman	2005	Is There an Association between Low Birth Weight and Caries in the Primary Dentition?	No data on caries in pregnancy
Saraiva	2009	Intrauterine Growth Restriction and Preterm Birth Were not Associated with Primary Teeth Caries	No data on caries in pregnancy
Sayyed	2014	The relationship between term pre-eclampsia and the risk of early childhood caries	No data on caries in pregnancy
Merglova	2012	Oral health status of women with high-risk pregnancies	No data on the outcomes explored in this systematic review
Dasanayake	2005	Salivary Actinomyces naeslundii Genospecies 2 and Lactobacillus casei Levels Predict Pregnancy Outcomes	No data on the outcomes explored in this systematic review
Khader	2007	Risk Indicators of Pre-Eclampsia in North Jordan: Is Dental Caries Involved?	No data on caries and PTB
Bosniak	2006	Pre-term delivery and periodontal disease: a case-control study from Croatia	No data on the outcomes explored in this systematic review
Budeli	2005	Periodontal infections and pre-term low birth weight: a case-control study	The number of decayed teeth were provided as a continuous variable; thus it was not possible to extrapolate any data regarding the occurrence of PTB in women with compared to those without caries. Furthermore, no information on the DMFT score was provided by the authors.
Durand	2009	A pilot study of the association between cariogenic oral bacteria and preterm birth	It was not possible to extrapolate data regarding the occurrence of PTB in pregnancies with compared to those without caries; furthermore, it was not possible to extract any information regarding the mean DMFT values in women who compared to those who did not deliver preterm
Abati	2012	Lack of association between maternal periodontal status and adverse pregnancy outcomes: a multicentric epidemiologic study	It was not possible to extrapolate data regarding the occurrence of PTB in pregnancies with compared to those without caries; furthermore, it was not possible to extract any information regarding the mean DMFT values in women who compared to

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PRISMA 2009 Checklist

Section/topic	#	Checklist item	Reported on page #
TITLE			
Title	1	Identify the report as a systematic review, meta-analysis, or both.	1
ABSTRACT			
Structured summary	2	Provide a structured summary including, as applicable: background; objectives; data sources; study eligibility criteria, participants, and interventions; study appraisal and synthesis methods; results; limitations; conclusions and implications of key findings; systematic review registration number.	2
INTRODUCTION			
Rationale	3	Describe the rationale for the review in the context of what is already known.	3
Objectives	4	Provide an explicit statement of questions being addressed with reference to participants, interventions, comparisons, outcomes, and study design (PICOS).	3
METHODS			
Protocol and registration	5	Indicate if a review protocol exists, if and where it can be accessed (e.g., Web address), and, if available, provide registration information including registration number.	4
Eligibility criteria	6	Specify study characteristics (e.g., PICOS, length of follow-up) and report characteristics (e.g., years considered, language, publication status) used as criteria for eligibility, giving rationale.	4
Information sources	7	Describe all information sources (e.g., databases with dates of coverage, contact with study authors to identify additional studies) in the search and date last searched.	4
Search	8	Present full electronic search strategy for at least one database, including any limits used, such that it could be repeated.	4
Study selection	9	State the process for selecting studies (i.e., screening, eligibility, included in systematic review, and, if applicable, included in the meta-analysis).	4-5
Data collection process	10	Describe method of data extraction from reports (e.g., piloted forms, independently, in duplicate) and any processes for obtaining and confirming data from investigators.	4-5
Data items	11	List and define all variables for which data were sought (e.g., PICOS, funding sources) and any assumptions and simplifications made.	4-5
Risk of bias in individual studies	12	Describe methods used for assessing risk of bias of individual studies (including specification of whether this was done at the study or outcome level), and how this information is to be used in any data synthesis.	5
Summary measures	13	State the principal summary measures (e.g., risk ratio, difference in means).	5-6
Synthesis of results	14	Describe the methods of handling data and combining results of studies, if done, including measures of consistency (e.g., I^2) for each meta-analysis.	6



PRISMA 2009 Checklist

Page 1 of 2

Section/topic	#	Checklist item	Reported on page #
Risk of bias across studies	15	Specify any assessment of risk of bias that may affect the cumulative evidence (e.g., publication bias, selective reporting within studies).	6
Additional analyses	16	Describe methods of additional analyses (e.g., sensitivity or subgroup analyses, meta-regression), if done, indicating which were pre-specified.	6
RESULTS			
Study selection	17	Give numbers of studies screened, assessed for eligibility, and included in the review, with reasons for exclusions at each stage, ideally with a flow diagram.	7
Study characteristics	18	For each study, present characteristics for which data were extracted (e.g., study size, PICOS, follow-up period) and provide the citations.	7
Risk of bias within studies	19	Present data on risk of bias of each study and, if available, any outcome level assessment (see item 12).	7
Results of individual studies	20	For all outcomes considered (benefits or harms), present, for each study: (a) simple summary data for each intervention group (b) effect estimates and confidence intervals, ideally with a forest plot.	7
Synthesis of results	21	Present results of each meta-analysis done, including confidence intervals and measures of consistency.	7
Risk of bias across studies	22	Present results of any assessment of risk of bias across studies (see Item 15).	7
Additional analysis	23	Give results of additional analyses, if done (e.g., sensitivity or subgroup analyses, meta-regression [see Item 16]).	7
DISCUSSION			
Summary of evidence	24	Summarize the main findings including the strength of evidence for each main outcome; consider their relevance to key groups (e.g., healthcare providers, users, and policy makers).	8
Limitations	25	Discuss limitations at study and outcome level (e.g., risk of bias), and at review-level (e.g., incomplete retrieval of identified research, reporting bias).	8-9
Conclusions	26	Provide a general interpretation of the results in the context of other evidence, and implications for future research.	8-9
FUNDING			
Funding	27	Describe sources of funding for the systematic review and other support (e.g., supply of data); role of funders for the systematic review.	18

From: Moher D, Liberati A, Tetzlaff J, Altman DG, The PRISMA Group (2009). Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses: The PRISMA Statement. PLoS Med 6(7): e1000097. doi:10.1371/journal.pmed1000097

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BMJ Open

Dental caries and preterm birth: A systematic review and meta-analysis

Journal:	<i>BMJ Open</i>
Manuscript ID	bmjopen-2017-018556.R1
Article Type:	Research
Date Submitted by the Author:	24-Nov-2017
Complete List of Authors:	Wagle, Madhu; Universitetet i Tromso Helsevitenskapelige fakultet Helsefak, Department of Clinical Medicine D'Antonio, Francesco; Universitetet i Tromso Helsevitenskapelige fakultet Helsefak, Department of Clinical Medicine Reierth, Eirik; University of Tromso, Science and Health Library Basnet, Purusotam; Universitetet i Tromso Helsevitenskapelige fakultet Helsefak, Department of Clinical Medicine Trovik, Tordis; Universitetet i Tromso Helsevitenskapelige fakultet Helsefak, Department of Community Medicine Orsini, Giovanna; Universita Politecnica delle Marche, Department of Clinical Sciences and Stomatology Manzoli, Lamberto; University of Ferrara, Department of Medical Sciences Acharya, G; Karolinska Institutet, Center for Fetal Medicine; Universitetet i Tromso Helsevitenskapelige fakultet Helsefak, Department of Clinical Medicine
Primary Subject Heading:	Dentistry and oral medicine
Secondary Subject Heading:	Obstetrics and gynaecology
Keywords:	Dental caries, pregnancy, pregnant woman, risk, preterm birth, EPIDEMIOLOGY, PUBLIC HEALTH

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Manuscripts

Title page**Dental caries and preterm birth:
A systematic review and meta-analysis**

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Word Count: Abstract- 220 words, Texts- 2431 words ,

Tables- 3

Figures- 3

Supplementary files- 3

ABSTRACT

Objectives: The primary objective of this systematic review was to evaluate the association between dental caries and preterm birth (PTB). The secondary objective was ascertaining the difference between women with dental caries who experienced PTB compared to those who did not with regards to decayed, missing, and filled teeth (DMFT) and decayed, missing, and filled surfaces (DMFS) indices.

Methods: Medline, Embase, Cinahl and Cochrane databases were searched initially in November 2015 and repeated in December 2016. We included observational cohort and case-control studies. Only studies reporting the risk of PTB in women affected compared to those not affected by dental caries in pregnancy were included. Random-effect meta-analyses were used to compute the summary odds ratio of PTB among women with caries versus women without caries, and the mean difference in either DMFT or DMFS indices between women experiencing PTB compared to those without PTB.

Results: Nine observational studies (4826 pregnancies) were included. Women affected by dental caries during pregnancy did not show a significantly higher risk of PTB [OR: 1.16, 95%CI (0.90, 1.49), $p=0.25$, $I^2=35\%$]. Also, the women with PTB did not show significantly higher DMFT or DMFS indices (summary mean differences: 1.56, $p=0.10$; $I^2=92\%$ and -0.15, $p=0.9$, $I^2=89\%$, respectively).

Conclusion: Dental caries does not appear to be a substantial risk factor for PTB.

PROSPERO Registration number: CRD42017062573

Strengths and limitations of this study

- Strength of the study is its robust methodology. We tried to cover all available studies, access data quality and synthesize suitable data.
- Small number of cases in some of the included studies, their design, different follow-up periods and dissimilarity of the population studies are the limitations.
- Similarly, the lack of description or classification of dental caries stage is another limitation due to which the stratification of analysis according to the disease severity could not be performed.

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Keywords: Dental caries, pregnancy, pregnant woman, risk, preterm birth.

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INTRODUCTION

Preterm birth (PTB) is the major cause of perinatal mortality and morbidity in the developed countries, with an estimated incidence of 5-13%¹⁻⁴. Although advances in neonatal care have led to a reduction in the neonatal mortality rate, infants born prematurely remain at risk of developing a wide array of short and long-term complications such as respiratory, gastrointestinal and neurodevelopmental disabilities⁴.

Several risk factors have been associated with PTB^{1,5}; among these, intrauterine infection has emerged as one of the most important factors. Despite this, PTB cannot be considered a unique disease but rather a syndrome characterized by multiple etiology and in which different factors may play a peculiar role⁵.

Periodontal disease has been shown to carry an increased risk for PTB; the rationale for this association is based on the suggestion that periodontitis may lead to maternal and fetal inflammation, thus triggering the common pathway of preterm parturition syndrome including increased uterine contractility, cervical ripening and decidua/membrane activation⁶⁻¹¹. Although dental caries, defined as a localized destruction of the tooth and its structure by the acidic by-product produced by the bacteria during the dietary carbohydrate fermentation¹², is one of the major oral health problems in developed countries, the effect of dental caries on pregnancy outcome have not been consistently explored. Pregnant women are more susceptible to dental caries and gingivitis compared to their non-pregnant counterparts¹³ because of the change in their diet, frequent snacking due to food craving and oral health negligence¹⁴. If left untreated, dental caries may result in further inflammatory complications¹⁵, which could influence pregnancy outcomes. Several studies reported that dental caries causing bacteria may have some influence on the pregnancy outcome as PTB and/or low birth weight, while in contrary, the other showed no association between these two factors¹⁶⁻²⁷.

The primary aim of this systematic review was to explore the association between dental caries and PTB; the secondary aim was to ascertain the differences in dental caries characteristics between women who deliver preterm compared to those who do not deliver preterm.

METHODOLOGY

Protocol, eligibility criteria, information sources and search

This review was performed according to an a-priori designed protocol and recommended for systematic reviews and meta-analysis^{28,29}.

We developed a search strategy, and a systematic literature search was performed in the following databases: Ovid MEDLINE(R) (In-Process & Other Non-Indexed Citations, Ovid MEDLINE(R), Daily, Ovid MEDLINE(R) and Ovid OLDMEDLINE(R), Embase Classic+ (Ovid), The Web of Science® (Thomson Reuters) and The Cochrane Library (Wiley) and CINAHL Plus (EBSCOhost).

The full search was performed in November 2015 and repeated in December 2016. Supplementary material 1 shows the complete search string as it was performed in Medline. The controlled vocabulary of Medical Subject Headings (MeSH) from Medline, and the Emtree thesaurus from Embase, including sub-headings, were used when applicable. In addition, the search fields; title, abstract and key words, were searched when applicable. In The Web of Science, the search fields, title and topic were used. All references were exported to Endnote™ (x7.4 – Thomson Reuters), where duplicates were removed. There were no restrictions regarding languages or publication year for the searches.

Reference lists of relevant articles and reviews were hand searched for additional reports. MOOSE guidelines were followed³⁰.

The study was registered with the PROSPERO database (Registration number: CRD42017062573).

Study selection, data collection and data items

We aimed to compare the incidence of preterm birth among the pregnant women population with dental caries to those who do not have dental caries.

The primary outcome was the occurrence of PTB, defined as birth <37 weeks of gestation. We aimed to categorise the analysis according the type of PTB (spontaneous vs iatrogenic vs term) and according to gestational age at birth (moderate to late preterm (32 to <37 weeks), very preterm (28 to <32 weeks) and extremely preterm <28 weeks³¹.

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3 The secondary objective was to ascertain the difference between women with dental caries who
4 experienced PTB compared to those who did not experience PTB in either decayed, missing, and
5 filled teeth (DMFT) or decayed, missing, and filled surfaces (DMFS) indices³².

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8 DMFT and DMFS indices are numerical expression of the caries prevalence of an individual or
9 groups and is widely used in epidemiological surveys of oral health. DMFT/DMFS is calculated
10 by adding up permanent teeth that are caries affected wherein D is for decay, M is missing due to
11 caries and F is filled teeth (T) or surfaces (S). If one tooth has filling as well as caries lesion, then
12 it is counted as D for DMFT index whereas filling+caries surface is counted as D but if there is F
13 on one and D in other surface, then they are counted differently for DMFS index. The anterior
14 teeth up to canine have 4 and pre-molars and molars teeth have 5 surfaces, respectively in DMFS
15 index. D+M+F = caries prevalence of an individual [maximum of 28 for DMFT and 128 for
16 DMFS, if 28 permanent teeth are included (excluding 4 wisdom molar teeth)]^{32, 33}.

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26 Studies were assessed according to the following criteria: population, outcome, gestational age at
27 birth and clinical characteristics of the caries during pregnancy. Observational cohort and case-
28 control studies were included. Similarly, studies reporting the occurrence of PTB in women
29 affected compared to those not affected by dental caries in pregnancies and the full text articles
30 were considered suitable for the inclusion in the present systematic review. Case reports,
31 conference abstracts and case series with fewer than 3 cases were also excluded to avoid
32 publication bias.

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37 Two authors (MW, FD) reviewed all abstracts independently. Agreement regarding potential
38 relevance was reached by consensus; full text copies of those papers were obtained and the same
39 two reviewers independently extracted relevant data regarding study characteristics and
40 pregnancy outcome. Inconsistencies were discussed among the reviewers and consensus reached.
41 Any dispute was resolved by discussion with a third author. If more than one study was published
42 for the same cohort with identical endpoints, the report containing the most comprehensive
43 information on the population was included to avoid overlapping populations. For those articles
44 in which information was not reported but the methodology was such that this information would
45 have been recorded initially, the authors were contacted.

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53 Quality assessment of the included studies was performed using the Newcastle-Ottawa Scale
54 (NOS)³⁴; according to NOS, each study is judged on three broad perspectives: the selection of the

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3 study groups; the comparability of the groups; and ascertainment outcome of interest. An
4 assessment of the selection of a study includes the evaluation of the representativeness of the
5 exposed cohort, selection of the non-exposed cohort, ascertainment of exposure and the
6 demonstration that outcome of interest was not present at start of study. The NOS tool for the
7 quality assessment of the studies is provided in supplementary material 2. According to the tool, a
8 study can be awarded a maximum of one star for each numbered item within the Selection and
9 Outcome categories. A maximum of two stars can be given for Comparability³⁴.

15 ***Statistical analysis***

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17 A first random-effect meta-analysis of binary outcomes was used to compute the summary odds
18 ratio (and relative 95% confidence interval - CI) of preterm birth (PTB) among women with
19 caries versus women without caries (controls).

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21 Other two meta-analyses evaluated continuous outcomes: decayed, missing and filled teeth
22 (DMFT), and decayed, missing and filled surfaces (DMFS). As the included studies did not differ
23 in their outcome definitions, we used a random-effect approach to compute the mean difference
24 in either DMFT or DMFS between PTB and non-PTB. In one study by Martinez-Martinez, the
25 standard deviations were not available, and we thus conservatively used the largest values
26 recorded in the other included studies.

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28 For all meta-analyses, the heterogeneity across studies was quantified using I^2 statistic, and all
29 computations were made using Review Manager (RevMan), version 5.3 (Copenhagen: The
30 Nordic Cochrane Centre, The Cochrane Collaboration, 2014).

RESULTS

General characteristics

A total of 1786 articles were identified, 20 were assessed with respect to their eligibility for inclusion (Supplementary Material 3) and 9 studies were included in the systematic review (Table 1, Figure 1). These 9 studies included 4826 pregnancies.

Results of quality assessment of the included studies using NOS for cohort studies are presented in Table 2. Most of the included studies scored at least 1 star in each of the three categories: the selection and comparability of the study groups, and ascertainment of the outcome of interest. The main weaknesses of these studies were their retrospective design, small sample size with even smaller number of events (PTB) and different gestational ages at assessment.

Synthesis of the results

Five studies explored the risk of PTB in women who had caries compared to those who did not have caries during pregnancy and reported that women affected by caries in pregnancy did not have an increased risk of delivering <37 weeks of gestation [OR: 1.16, 95% CI (0.90, 1.49), $p=0.25$; $I^2: 35\%$]. (Figure 2).

Stratification according to DMFT and DMFS indices to evaluate the association between caries and preterm birth was performed only by five and three studies, respectively. There was no difference in either DMFT [1.56, 95% CI (-0.28, 3.41), $p=0.10$] and DMFS [-0.15, 95%CI (-3.40, 3.09), $p=0.9$] (Table 3) (Figure 3).

Due to very small number of included cases and lack of information from the original study, it was not possible to perform any sub-analysis according to different gestational age at birth and type of PTB (spontaneous vs iatrogenic vs term).

DISCUSSIONS

Summary of evidence

The findings from this systematic review showed that pregnant women with dental caries are not at increased risk for PTB. Furthermore, there was no difference in the mean DMFT and DMFS indices between women with dental caries who experienced PTB compared to those who did not.

Strength and limitations

This is, to our knowledge, the first systematic review exploring the strength of association between dental caries and PTB. The strength of this meta-analysis is its robust methodology. We tried to cover all available studies, assess the quality of the data and synthesize all suitable data.

The small number of cases in some of the included studies, their retrospective non-randomized design, different periods of follow-up, dissimilarity of the populations studied (due to various inclusion criteria) and lack of standardized criteria for the antenatal management of pregnancies with dental caries represent the major limitations of this systematic review. Lack of data on early PTB, which is typically associated with infection and inflammation, was another major limitation of the present systematic review. Furthermore, we could not stratify the analysis according to maternal characteristics and caries stage at diagnosis in view of the lack of such information in the large majority of included studies. Assessment of the potential publication bias was also problematic because of the nature of the outcome evaluated (outcome rates with the left-side limited to a value of zero), which limits the reliability of funnel plots, and because of the small number of individual studies, which strongly limits the reliability of formal tests. Finally, statistical heterogeneity among the included studies was another major limitation of the present review which may potentially bias the study findings. In view of these limitations, the findings from this systematic review should be interpreted with cautions.

Implication for clinical practice

The consequences of overall oral health including the oral health in pregnant women is of a great concern³⁵. Dental caries and periodontal disease are the most common oral diseases worldwide. The higher prevalence of gingival alterations during pregnancy, especially bleeding during brushing, is a problem that is commonly encountered by pregnant women. Properly maintained oral hygiene care is known to have an impact on the oral health of pregnant women^{36, 37} and

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3 availability of free dental care also appears to influence this³⁸. Whereas in contrast, if proper oral
4 hygiene is not maintained during pregnancy, the chances to develop oral health problems as
5 enamel erosions, dental caries³⁹ and gingivitis increases.
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8 There are no reports indicating that the incidence of dental caries increases during pregnancy, but
9 the chances of getting dental caries could increase¹⁴ and the prevalence of dental caries seemed to
10 be higher in older pregnant women⁴⁰. Despite the high dental caries prevalence in most developed
11 countries, very few studies have explored the potential association between oral health and
12 adverse pregnancy outcome.
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18 Identification of women at higher risk of PTB is fundamental to prevent the likelihood of
19 delivering preterm. Several risk factors as been associated with PTB, such as prior history of
20 PTB, cervical disease and infection. Despite this, finding an association between a given risk
21 factor and the occurrence of PTB is challenging.
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27 Dental caries is a frequently encountered oral health problem in pregnancy as pregnant women
28 are more susceptible to caries compared to non-pregnant women¹³. Being caused by an infectious
29 process, dental caries can theoretically lead to inflammation and thus increase the risk of PTB¹².
30 Despite this, we could not find any significant association between dental caries and PTB;
31 furthermore, we did not find any significant difference in the severity of caries assessed by
32 DMFT and DMFS indices between women who experienced PTB compared to those who did
33 not. In addition to this, since most of these studies have evaluated women after delivery, this may
34 also have influenced the results.
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41 The lack of association between dental caries and PTB is difficult to explain. The initiation and
42 progression of the caries lesion is very slow and the destruction caused by caries in initial stage
43 can be reversible¹². In addition to this, pregnancy itself does not cause dental caries but it may
44 exacerbate the existing condition. Dental caries is symptomless until there is severe and
45 irreversible destruction of teeth⁴¹. It might be possible that bacterial spreading during caries
46 formation and the subsequent production of pro-inflammatory mediators induced by oral
47 pathogens may not be of the magnitude to cause production of pro-inflammatory mediators
48 enough to initiate PTB.
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3 Even though we found no significant relationship between the dental caries and PTB, it is still
4 important for the health professionals to promote oral health among the pregnant women. This is
5 because pregnant women are susceptible to dental problems; have very limited knowledge and
6 awareness about the importance of oral health and its potential impact on pregnancy outcomes^{38,}
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8⁴². Furthermore, the risk of transmitting the oral cariogenic flora from the mother to her infant
9 through feeding practices and predisposing the infant to early childhood caries in the future
10 should not be neglected⁴³⁻⁴⁶. Therefore, large prospective studies aiming at ascertaining the
11 association between dental caries and spontaneous PTB, according to the gestational age at
12 occurrence, severity of the disease and presence of other co-morbidities are needed in order to
13 elucidate the role, if any, of dental caries in increasing the risk of PTB.
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TABLES

Table 1. General characteristics of the included studies.

Author	Year	Country	Period analyzed (y)	Study design	Gestational age at dental examination	Number of subject (n)	Definition of PTB
Martinez-Martinez	2016	Mexico	2013-2014	Retrospective	From the first trimester of pregnancy until 8 weeks postpartum	70	<37 weeks
Harjunmaa	2015	Malawi	2011-2013	Prospective	Within 6 weeks after delivery	1024	<37 weeks
Acharya	2013	India	2009	Retrospective	Within 1 day after delivery	316	<37 weeks
Vergnes	2011	France	2003-2006	Retrospective	Within 2–4 days post-partum	2201	<37 weeks
Ryalat	2011	Jordan	2009	Prospective	Within 1 week post-partum	200	<37 weeks
Durand	2009	France	2005-2006	Prospective	Within 8 weeks after delivery	107	<37 weeks
Heimonen	2008	Finland	2002-2004	Retrospective	Within 2 days post-partum	328	<37 weeks
Mumghamba	2007	Tanzania	NS	Retrospective	Within 40 days from delivery	373	<37 weeks
Meurman	2006	Finland	1998-2000	Retrospective	From the first trimester of pregnancy	207	<37 weeks

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- Ryalat S, Sawair F, Baqain Z, Barghout N, Amin W, Badran D, Badran E. Effect of Oral Diseases on Mothers Giving Birth to Preterm Infants. *Med Princ Pract.* 2011;20(6):556-61.
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- Meurman JH, Furuholm J, Kaaja R, Rintamaki H, Tikkanen U. Oral health in women with pregnancy and delivery complications. *Clin Oral Investig.* 2006;10(2):96-101.

Table 2. Quality assessment of the included studies according to Newcastle-Ottawa Scale (NOS) a study can be awarded a maximum of one star for each numbered item within the Selection and Outcome categories. A maximum of two stars can be given for Comparability.

Author	Year	Selection	Comparability	Outcome
Martinez-Martinez	2016	★★	★	★
Harjunmaa	2015	★★	★	★
Acharya	2013	★★	★	★★
Vergnes	2011	★★★	★★	★
Ryalat	2011	★★★	★	★★
Durand	2009	★★★★	★★	★★
Heimonen	2008	★★	★	★
Mumghamba	2007	★★	★	★
Meurman	2006	★★	★	★

Table 3. Selected outcomes evaluating the association between dental caries and preterm birth.

Outcomes	N. studies (n/N)	Odds Ratio (95% CI)	p	I², %^a
Preterm birth (PTB), women with dental caries versus controls	5 (1472/4246)	1.16 (0.90; 1.49)	0.25	35
	N. studies (n/N)	Mean difference (95% CI)	p	I², %
DMFT (PTB versus Non-PTB)	5 (2963)	1.56 (-0.28; 3.41)	0.10	92
DMFS (PTB versus Non-PTB)	3 (2594)	-0.15 (-3.40; 3.09)	0.9	89

CI: Confidence interval. n: number of events. N: total number of participants. DMFT: Decayed, missed, and filled teeth. DMFS: Decayed, missed, and filled surface.

a: I² is a measure of the heterogeneity among the included studies. a value $\geq 50\%$ indicates high while $< 50\%$ low heterogeneity.

FUNDING

No funding was received for the conduction of this review.

The publication charges for this article have been funded by a grant from the publication fund of UiT The Arctic University of Norway.

CONTRIBUTORS

Study concept, design and methodology - MW, GA, FD'A, ER

Data Collection and entry - ER

Abstracts and articles review - MW, FD'A

Analysis and interpretation of data - F'DA, MW, GO, LM

Supervision - FD'A, GA, PB, TAT

Writing, review, critique, comments and revision of manuscript- MW, FD'A, ER, TAT, PB, GO, LM, GA

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We would sincerely like to thank Prof. S Acharya, Prof. S Abati, Prof. I Cetin, Prof. GG Campus, Prof. A Villa, Prof. R Martinez, Prof. S Ryalat, Prof. JH Meurman, Prof. Y Khader, Prof. A Heimonen, Prof. U Harjunmaa, Prof. R Durand, Prof. N Buduneli and Prof. AP Dasanayake for their co-operation and contribution by providing additional data and necessary information for this systemic review.

COMPETING INTERESTS

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

DATA SHARING STATEMENT

No additional data is available.

ABBREVIATION

CI – Confidence Interval

DMFS – Decayed, Missing, Filled Surface

DMFT- Decayed, Missing, Filled Teeth

NOS - Newcastle-Ottawa Scale

OR – Odds Ratio

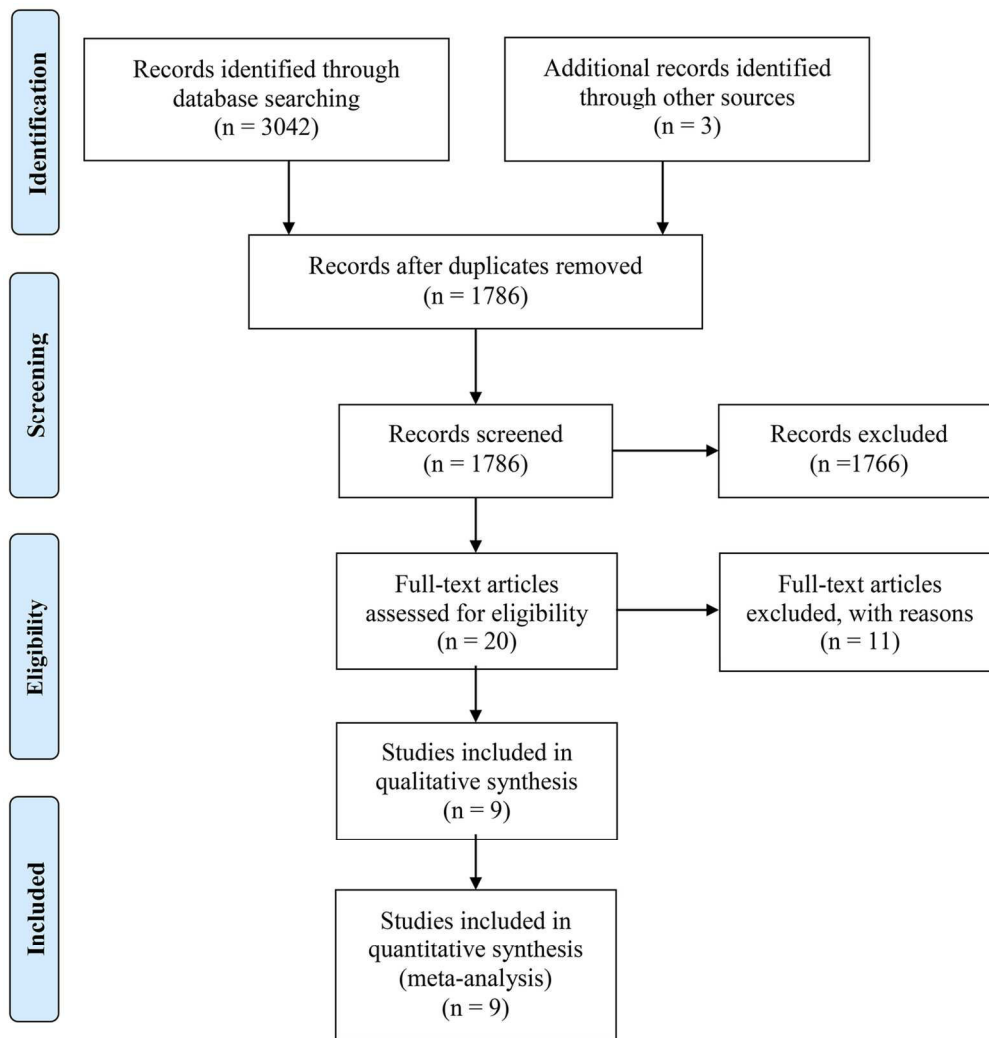
PTB – Preterm Birth

FIGURES

Figure_1. Systematic review flowchart

Figure_2. Pooled odd ratio (OR) for the risk of preterm birth (PTB) in women compared with those without dental caries.

Figure_3_a_b. Mean differences in DMFT and DMFS indices in women with dental caries compared to those who did not experience PTB.



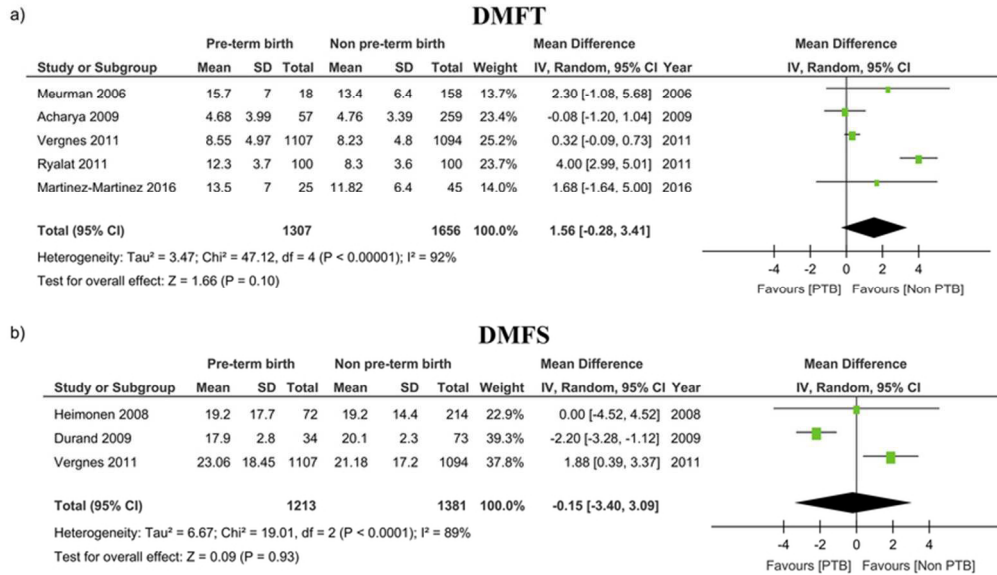
Figure_1. Systematic review flowchart

130x136mm (300 x 300 DPI)



Figure_2. Pooled odd ratio (OR) for the risk of preterm birth (PTB) in women compared with those without dental caries.

40x12mm (300 x 300 DPI)



Figure_3_a_b. Mean differences in DMFT and DMFS indices in women with dental caries compared to those who did not experience PTB.

72x41mm (300 x 300 DPI)

Supplementary material 1



NEWCASTLE - OTTAWA QUALITY ASSESSMENT SCALE CASE CONTROL STUDIES

Note: A study can be awarded a maximum of one star for each numbered item within the Selection and Exposure categories. A maximum of two stars can be given for Comparability.

Selection

- 1) Is the case definition adequate?
 - a) yes, with independent validation *
 - b) yes, eg record linkage or based on self reports
 - c) no description
- 2) Representativeness of the cases
 - a) consecutive or obviously representative series of cases *
 - b) potential for selection biases or not stated
- 3) Selection of Controls
 - a) community controls *
 - b) hospital controls
 - c) no description
- 4) Definition of Controls
 - a) no history of disease (endpoint) *
 - b) no description of source

Comparability

- 1) Comparability of cases and controls on the basis of the design or analysis
 - a) study controls for _____ (Select the most important factor.) *
 - b) study controls for any additional factor * (This criteria could be modified to indicate specific control for a second important factor.)

Exposure

- 1) Ascertainment of exposure
 - a) secure record (eg surgical records) *
 - b) structured interview where blind to case/control status *
 - c) interview not blinded to case/control status
 - d) written self report or medical record only
 - e) no description
- 2) Same method of ascertainment for cases and controls
 - a) yes *
 - b) no
- 3) Non-Response rate
 - a) same rate for both groups *
 - b) non respondents described
 - c) rate different and no designation

NEWCASTLE - OTTAWA QUALITY ASSESSMENT SCALE COHORT STUDIES

Note: A study can be awarded a maximum of one star for each numbered item within the Selection and Outcome categories. A maximum of two stars can be given for Comparability

Selection

1) Representativeness of the exposed cohort

- a) truly representative of the average _____ (describe) in the community *
- b) somewhat representative of the average _____ in the community *
- c) selected group of users eg nurses, volunteers
- d) no description of the derivation of the cohort

2) Selection of the non exposed cohort

- a) drawn from the same community as the exposed cohort *
- b) drawn from a different source
- c) no description of the derivation of the non exposed cohort

3) Ascertainment of exposure

- a) secure record (eg surgical records) *
- b) structured interview *
- c) written self report
- d) no description

4) Demonstration that outcome of interest was not present at start of study

- a) yes *
- b) no

Comparability

1) Comparability of cohorts on the basis of the design or analysis

- a) study controls for _____ (select the most important factor) *
- b) study controls for any additional factor * (This criteria could be modified to indicate specific control for a second important factor.)

Outcome

1) Assessment of outcome

- a) independent blind assessment *
- b) record linkage *
- c) self report
- d) no description

2) Was follow-up long enough for outcomes to occur

- a) yes (select an adequate follow up period for outcome of interest) *
- b) no

3) Adequacy of follow up of cohorts

- a) complete follow up - all subjects accounted for *
- b) subjects lost to follow up unlikely to introduce bias - small number lost - > ____ % (select an adequate %) follow up, or description provided of those lost) *
- c) follow up rate < ____ % (select an adequate %) and no description of those lost
- d) no statement

Supplementary Table 3. Excluded studies and reason for the exclusion.

Author	Year	Title	Reason for the exclusion
Buduneli	2005	Periodontal infections and pre-term low birth weight: a case-control study	The number of decayed teeth were provided as a continuous variable; thus it was not possible to extrapolate any data regarding the occurrence of PTB in women with compared to those without caries. Furthermore, no information on the DMFT score was provided by the authors.
Dasanayake	2005	Salivary Actinomyces naeslundii Genospecies 2 and Lactobacillus casei Levels Predict Pregnancy Outcomes	No data on the outcomes explored in this systematic review
Shulman	2005	Is There an Association between Low Birth Weight and Caries in the Primary Dentition?	No data on caries in pregnancy
Bosnjak	2006	Pre-term delivery and periodontal disease: a case-control study from Croatia	No data on the outcomes explored in this systematic review
Khader	2007	Risk Indicators of Pre-Eclampsia in North Jordan: Is Dental Caries Involved?	No data on caries and PTB
Saraiva	2007	Are intrauterine growth restriction and preterm birth associated with dental caries?	No data on caries in pregnancy
Cunha-Cruz	2009	Intrauterine Growth Restriction and Preterm Birth Were not Associated with Primary Teeth Caries	No data on caries in pregnancy
Durand	2009	A pilot study of the association between cariogenic oral bacteria and preterm birth	It was not possible to extrapolate data regarding the occurrence of PTB in pregnancies with compared to those without caries; furthermore, it was not possible to extract any information regarding the mean DMFT values in women who compared to those who did not deliver preterm
Merglova	2012	Oral health status of women with high-risk pregnancies	No data on the outcomes explored in this systematic review
Abati	2013	Lack of association between maternal periodontal status and adverse pregnancy outcomes: a multicentric epidemiologic study	It was not possible to extrapolate data regarding the occurrence of PTB in pregnancies with compared to those without caries; furthermore, it was not possible to extract any information regarding the mean DMFT values in women who compared to those who did
Sayyed	2014	The relationship between term pre-eclampsia and the risk of early childhood caries	No data on caries in pregnancy



PRISMA 2009 Checklist

Section/topic	#	Checklist item	Reported on page #
TITLE			
Title	1	Identify the report as a systematic review, meta-analysis, or both.	1
ABSTRACT			
Structured summary	2	Provide a structured summary including, as applicable: background; objectives; data sources; study eligibility criteria, participants, and interventions; study appraisal and synthesis methods; results; limitations; conclusions and implications of key findings; systematic review registration number.	2
INTRODUCTION			
Rationale	3	Describe the rationale for the review in the context of what is already known.	4
Objectives	4	Provide an explicit statement of questions being addressed with reference to participants, interventions, comparisons, outcomes, and study design (PICOS).	5
METHODS			
Protocol and registration	5	Indicate if a review protocol exists, if and where it can be accessed (e.g., Web address), and, if available, provide registration information including registration number.	5
Eligibility criteria	6	Specify study characteristics (e.g., PICOS, length of follow-up) and report characteristics (e.g., years considered, language, publication status) used as criteria for eligibility, giving rationale.	5
Information sources	7	Describe all information sources (e.g., databases with dates of coverage, contact with study authors to identify additional studies) in the search and date last searched.	5
Search	8	Present full electronic search strategy for at least one database, including any limits used, such that it could be repeated.	5
Study selection	9	State the process for selecting studies (i.e., screening, eligibility, included in systematic review, and, if applicable, included in the meta-analysis).	5-6
Data collection process	10	Describe method of data extraction from reports (e.g., piloted forms, independently, in duplicate) and any processes for obtaining and confirming data from investigators.	5-6
Data items	11	List and define all variables for which data were sought (e.g., PICOS, funding sources) and any assumptions and simplifications made.	5-6
Risk of bias in individual studies	12	Describe methods used for assessing risk of bias of individual studies (including specification of whether this was done at the study or outcome level), and how this information is to be used in any data synthesis.	6-7
Summary measures	13	State the principal summary measures (e.g., risk ratio, difference in means).	6-7
Synthesis of results	14	Describe the methods of handling data and combining results of studies, if done, including measures of consistency (e.g., I^2) for each meta-analysis.	7-8



PRISMA 2009 Checklist

Section/topic	#	Checklist item	Reported on page #
Risk of bias across studies	15	Specify any assessment of risk of bias that may affect the cumulative evidence (e.g., publication bias, selective reporting within studies).	7-8
Additional analyses	16	Describe methods of additional analyses (e.g., sensitivity or subgroup analyses, meta-regression), if done, indicating which were pre-specified.	7-8
RESULTS			
Study selection	17	Give numbers of studies screened, assessed for eligibility, and included in the review, with reasons for exclusions at each stage, ideally with a flow diagram.	8
Study characteristics	18	For each study, present characteristics for which data were extracted (e.g., study size, PICOS, follow-up period) and provide the citations.	8
Risk of bias within studies	19	Present data on risk of bias of each study and, if available, any outcome level assessment (see item 12).	8
Results of individual studies	20	For all outcomes considered (benefits or harms), present, for each study: (a) simple summary data for each intervention group (b) effect estimates and confidence intervals, ideally with a forest plot.	8
Synthesis of results	21	Present results of each meta-analysis done, including confidence intervals and measures of consistency.	8
Risk of bias across studies	22	Present results of any assessment of risk of bias across studies (see Item 15).	8
Additional analysis	23	Give results of additional analyses, if done (e.g., sensitivity or subgroup analyses, meta-regression [see Item 16]).	8
DISCUSSION			
Summary of evidence	24	Summarize the main findings including the strength of evidence for each main outcome; consider their relevance to key groups (e.g., healthcare providers, users, and policy makers).	9
Limitations	25	Discuss limitations at study and outcome level (e.g., risk of bias), and at review-level (e.g., incomplete retrieval of identified research, reporting bias).	9-10
Conclusions	26	Provide a general interpretation of the results in the context of other evidence, and implications for future research.	10-11
FUNDING			
Funding	27	Describe sources of funding for the systematic review and other support (e.g., supply of data); role of funders for the systematic review.	18

From: Moher D, Liberati A, Tetzlaff J, Altman DG, The PRISMA Group (2009). Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses: The PRISMA Statement. PLoS Med 6(7): e1000097. doi:10.1371/journal.pmed1000097

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