

CA-LEND Leadership Project

Final Presentation

**EXPANDING THE ROLE OF PEDIATRIC DIETITIANS IN SUPPORTING
ORAL HEALTH IN CHILDREN WITH CONGENITAL HEART DEFECTS**
(Type: Research)

Project Team

Karnie Babikian, MS

Christina Armendariz, MS

Jose C. Pollido DDS, MS

Gainly To, DDS

Hope Wills, MA, RD, CSP, IBCLC

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ABSTRACT

Children with congenital heart defects (CHD) exhibit a higher prevalence of poor oral health compared to children without CHD. Dental caries and gingival disease increase the risk for bacterial infections that can result in infective endocarditis and delay surgical interventions. This review of literature demonstrates the relationship between poor oral health and CHD. Conventional programs aimed at enhancing oral health in healthy children and those with CHD have demonstrated variable and short-term success, partly due to lack of individual focus. Nutrition and food choices impact oral health, highlighting the need for additional support and guidance from registered dietitians. Pediatric Registered Dietitians (RDs) can promote oral health through screening, focused nutrition education and individualized goals to support optimal growth.

Project Plain Language Summary

Our project shows that kids with heart problems often have problems with their teeth, like cavities. These teeth problems can cause infections and delay care for their heart. Including the Dietitian in looking at children's teeth can help find out if children are at risk for cavities or other problems with their teeth. Dietitians ask questions about what kids eat and drink. Some foods and drinks can cause more harm to teeth than others. Dietitians help families choose foods that are less harmful for their teeth and encourage healthy choices.