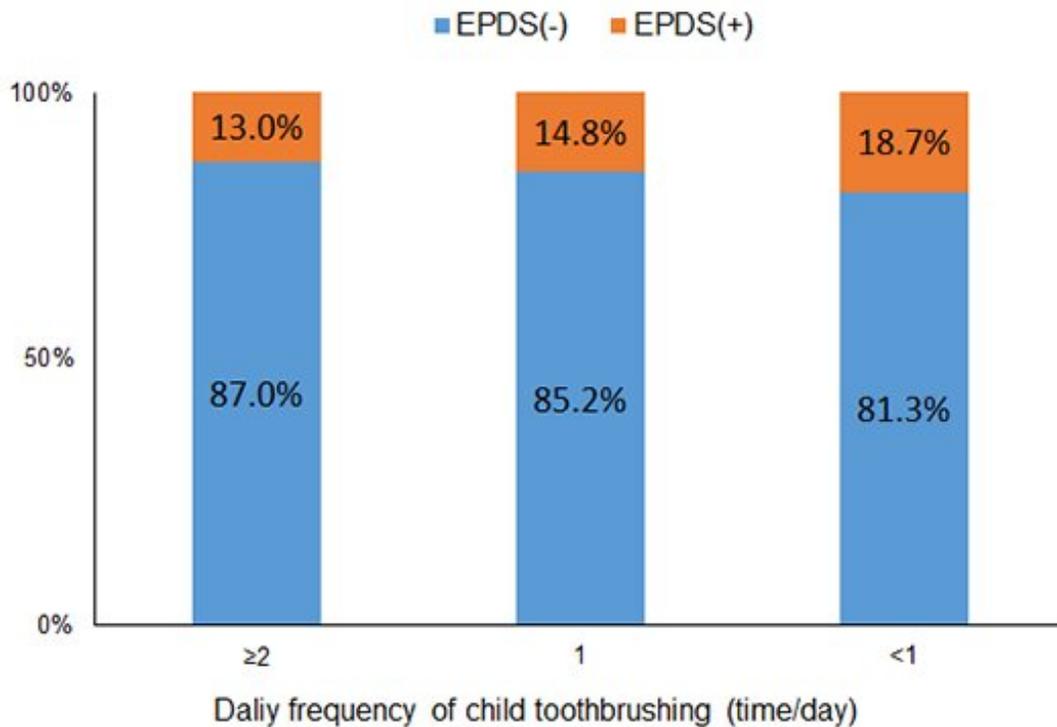


Good toothbrushing habits in children linked to mother's wellbeing

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The association between the prevalence of maternal postpartum depression at one month and the child's daily tooth brushing frequency. Credit: Shinobu Tsuchiya et al

A mother's mental health may play a larger role in a child's toothbrushing habits than previously thought.

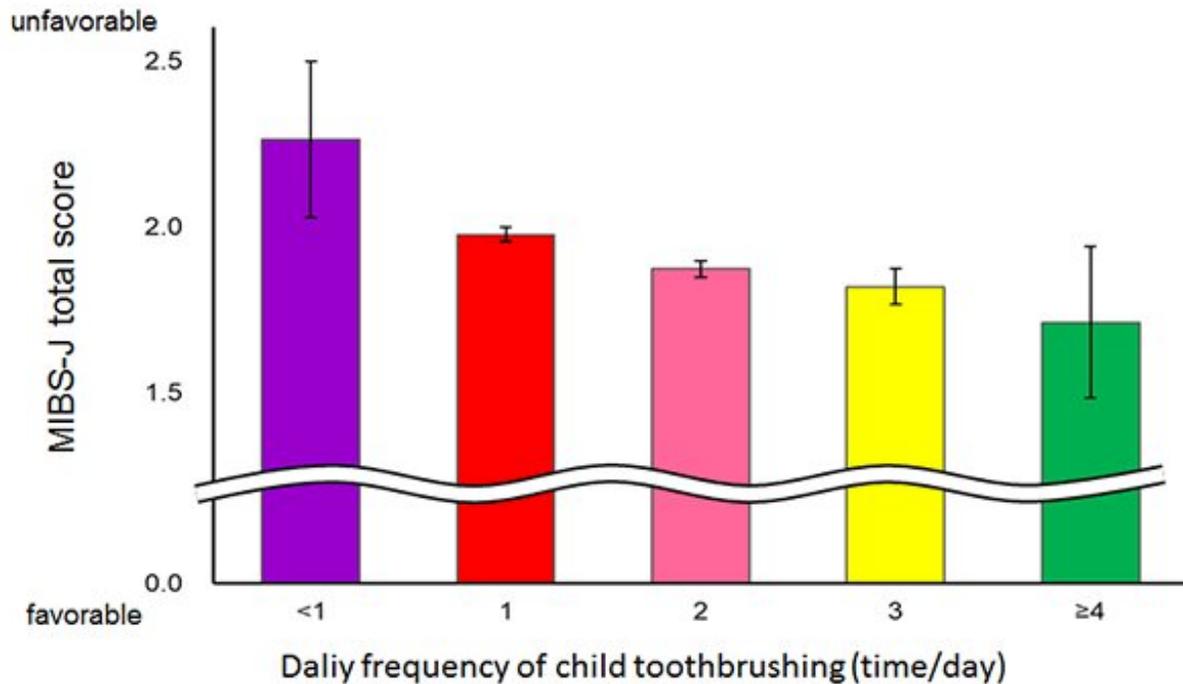
It is no secret that brushing your teeth twice a day is highly effective in promoting healthy teeth and gums. The International Association of Pediatric Dentistry advocates brushing with toothpaste containing fluoride to prevent decayed, missing, or filled teeth—known as childhood [dental caries](#) (ECC)—in [children](#).

Parents are instrumental in instilling good dental habits in their children.

In Japan, there is a worryingly high prevalence of ECC among children aged three years old. Postpartum depression and/or lack of affection caused by bonding disorders hamper a mother's ability to cultivate healthy dental practices in children, and researchers were keen to explore this link.

Dr. Shinobu Tsuchiya from Tohoku University Hospital led a research group that analyzed approximately 80,000 mother-infant pairs from the Ministry of Environment's Japan Environment and Children's Study.

They found children with mothers suffering from [postpartum depression](#) or bonding disorders brushed their teeth less often. Likewise, the frequency with which children brushed their teeth increased when mothers showed strong affection towards their children.



The association between scores on the Mother-to-Infant Bonding Scale (MIBS) and the child's daily tooth brushing frequency. Credit: Shinobu Tsuchiya et al

The research group hopes their research will foster greater mental support and management for mothers and that doctors will incorporate these factors when assessing children's oral health.

"A mother's psychological well-being provides valuable screening information for identifying children at a high risk of ECC," said Tsuchiya.

In future studies, Tsuchiya and her team hope to examine other [environmental influences](#) on poor oral health.

More information: Shinobu Tsuchiya et al, Influence of maternal postpartum depression on children's toothbrushing frequency, *Community Dentistry and Oral Epidemiology* (2021). [DOI: 10.1111/cdoe.12672](https://doi.org/10.1111/cdoe.12672)

Provided by Tohoku University

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