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Resumo	<p>This research aimed to explore the relationship between tumor necrosis factor-<math>\alpha</math> (TNF-<math>\alpha</math>), <i>Lactobacillus acidophilus</i> (<i>L. acidophilus</i>), <i>Lactobacillus gasseri</i> (<i>L. gasseri</i>), obesity, and early childhood caries. After caries and obesity diagnosis based on the WHO criteria, 94 preschoolers were assessed. Unstimulated saliva was collected for analysis of TNF-<math>\alpha</math> by the Milliplex system and for <i>L. acidophilus</i> and <i>L. gasseri</i> using real-time polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR). In obese children, each unit increase in the body mass index (BMI), and the TNF-<math>\alpha</math> levels was associated with a one-time increase in the number of decayed surfaces (<math>p &lt; 0.05</math>). Meanwhile, in eutrophic preschoolers, the presence of <i>L. gasseri</i> and <i>L. acidophilus</i> was linked, respectively, to an increase of 3.04 and 1.59 times in the number of decayed surfaces (<math>p &lt; 0.05</math>); in obese children, the presence of <i>L. acidophilus</i> was not significant (<math>p &gt; 0.05</math>) and <i>L. gasseri</i> was shown as a possible protective indicator (RR:0.49–<math>p &lt; 0.05</math>). In conclusion, TNF-<math>\alpha</math> and BMI were connected to carious lesions only in obese preschoolers, suggesting that inflammation could be underscored when both pathologies are concomitant. The presence of both species of lactobacilli investigated was connected with early childhood caries in eutrophic children, whereas in obese children only <i>L. gasseri</i> was significant, and in an opposite way, reinforcing that obesity can modulate oral bacteria.</p>
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