

Sofija Stefanović, Jelena Jovanović, Kristina Penezić, Tamara Blagojević. 2016. New weaning food for prehistoric babies and origin of caries. 20th Congress of the European Anthropological Association *European Anthropology in a Changing World: From Culture to Global Biology*, 24th – 28th August 2016, Zagreb, Croatia.

Abstract: Increase in caries is described in many Neolithic populations and often interpreted as a consequence of diet based more on carbohydrates. However, we suggest that intensification of caries is probably more connected to new way of food preparation with Neolithic than with new type of food. Special threat for deciduous teeth was new weaning food for babies, probably kind of porridge based on grinned cereals and milk which form a sticky paste around the teeth causing dental caries. We combine different lines of archaeological and bioarchaeological evidences from the territory of the Central Balkans which suggest appearance of new weaning food and increase of caries on deciduous teeth with Neolithic. First, we present our results of microscopic study of 40 Early Neolithic bone spoons from the sites Starcevo and Donja Branjevina, on which we had found evidences of deciduous teeth bite-marks, suggesting their usage for feeding the babies with porridge. Second, we present appearance of caries on children of known duration of breastfeeding from sites Lepenski Vir and Ajmana on which we had found correlation between duration of breastfeeding and caries presence. Our results indicate that in further understanding of origin of caries more attention should be on new way of food preparation in Neolithic than on food itself.