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Original article

Histological Changes in Dental Enamel During the Development of Permanent Teeth

Fars Mughrbi[1], Roula Etwati[1], Khalid Omar[2]*, Ghada Alzwaghi[3]

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[1]*Department of Conservative Dentistry, Tripoli Dental School, University of Tripoli, Tripoli, Libya.*
[2]*Department of Fixed, Tripoli Dental School, University of Tripoli, Tripoli, Libya.*
[3]*Ministry of Health, Sabratha, Libya*
**** Correspondence****: khaledzw2019@gmail.com*

Abstract

Background and Objective*. Dental health is a significant concern, with the enamel layer of teeth being affected by environmental and nutritional factors. Factors such as erosion, poor mineralization, and erosion can compromise the enamel's strength and functionality. To prevent early deterioration of oral and dental health, it is crucial to investigate the factors influencing enamel structure and histological changes.* ***Methods****. We used advanced histological techniques examined three primary tooth types: incisors, canines, and molars.* ***Results.*** *The findings showed that molars have a higher enamel thickness (HV 400-600, p<0.01) than incisors (HV 250-300, p<0.01), suggesting they need a thicker enamel layer to withstand chewing forces. The study also found that enamel in its early embryonic phases had a lower mineralization density (20%, p<0.01), but increased with growth, reaching 90% in molars and 87% in incisors. The study also found variations in enamel columns' structure between teeth, with incisors and canines having more regular and thicker enamel column. In* ***conclusion****, environmental factors, such as fluoride imbalances, can cause anomalies in enamel histology, leading to abnormal calcifications and lower enamel density. Awareness programs targeting parents and the community about balancing minerals, such as calcium and magnesium, in children's diets during tooth development are recommended.*

Keywords: *Enamel, Amelogenesis, Amnioblasts Cells, Amelogenin, Hydroxyapatite.*

Introduction

Amelogenesis is the term used to describe the process of enamel development. Ameloblasts release enamel matrix proteins into the enamel gap, where they are subsequently broken down and eliminated by proteolysis. Ameloblasts control the de novo hydroxyapatite-based (Hap-based) inorganic material production in the enamel region with a great degree of accuracy. The resulting enamel is characterized by its prismatic appearance and is made up of inter-rod enamel surrounding the enamel rods and rods that extend from the dentino-enamel junction (DEJ) to the enamel surface. Each rod is created by a single ameloblast [1].

The fully formed (mature) enamel contains traces of EMP peptides, which are thought to contribute to the final structure and give the fully formed enamel its distinct morphological and biomechanical characteristics. Mature enamel is composed of -2-4% water, -1-2% organic material, and 95% mineral by weight (100, 331, 479, 509, 523, 548) [1].

The proteins that make up the enamel matrix, the function of ameloblast-mediated ion transport and mineralization, and the significance of extracellular pH regulation during enamel formation will all receive special attention. We will provide an overview of the current understanding of enamel genotype-phenotype interactions, as well as the growing body of data regarding the clinical effects that arise from aberrant ameloblast function linked to certain gene mutations [2].

Several cell types derived from the epithelium are formed during amelogenesis. A single layer of cells that develop into ameloblasts makes up the inner most layer, known as the inner enamel epithelium. The outer enamel epithelium, the outermost layer, is likewise made up of a single layer of cells. With one exception, the cervical loop, where the inner and outer enamel epithelium converge, serves as a niche for dental epithelial stem cells (47, 204, 272, 336, 379, 380, 420). As a result, it supplies a steady supply of enamel-forming cells until the enamel crown is completely created [3].

The morphology of the cells that make up the enamel organ varies greatly between the secretory and maturation stages (228, 541), provided a histological illustration of the evolving ameloblast morphologies during amelogenesis [4]. It is simple to identify four cell types during the secretory stage: a single layer of secretory ameloblasts; the stellate reticulum, which is made up of a bigger collection of star-shaped cells; the stratum intermedium, which is usually one or two cell layers thick; and the single-layer outer [1].

The primary phases include the early formation of a dental lamina, which is made up of an inward-growing band of thickened oral epithelium at particular locations that are dictated by the local expression of important transcription factors. The bud, cap, and bell phases follow the dental placode, which is formed by the dental lamina quickly folding and penetrating the underlying mesenchyme. The development of the roots comes after these phases, which form the crown.

The mesenchyme initially orchestrates the epithelial-mesenchymal molecular cross-talk very early in tooth formation, causing the underlying neural crest-derived mesenchyme to differentiate into cells that will form the rest of the tooth while the epithelial cells that will form enamel begin to differentiate to form ameloblasts [1].

Amelogenesis, a highly coordinated process that is a component of overall tooth development, is how enamel is formed in permanent teeth. This procedure lasts until the tooth erupts and starts in the latter phases of embryonic development. There are five primary phases of enamel creation each of which involves distinct cellular processes and structural alterations.

Stages of Dental Enamel Formation‹Amelogenesis occurs in stages in a well-delin-eated extracellular compartment. Dentin and enamel formation take place simultaneously, and both pro- cesses start along a line that will become the dentino-enamel junction, or DEJ. These ribbons are evenly spaced, oriented parallel to each other, and extend from the DEJ to the mineral-ization front just outside the membrane of amelo-blasts (the cells lining the extracellular compartment on the enamel side) as ameloblasts secrete enamel proteins, the crystallites continue to grow in length, but grow very little in width and thickness.

Precursor cells undergo differentiation into ameloblasts, the cells that produce enamel, during this first stage. The inner enamel epithelium of the growing tooth germ is the source of ameloblasts. Ameloblasts polarize and lengthen during this phase in preparation for secretion. The cells join with the nearby odontoblasts that create dentin. The dentino-enamel junction (DEJ), which serves as the interface between enamel and dentin, is formed as a result of this stage [5].

To reach its ultimate hardness and structure, the enamel goes through a substantial mineralization process during the maturation period. Ameloblasts changing between smooth-ended and ruffle-ended forms to control ion exchange and mineral deposition are characteristics of this stage. Proteolytic enzymes remove any remaining organic matrix components. Calcium and phosphate ion inflow promotes the development and maturation of hydroxyapatite crystals, completing the mineralization of the enamel. By the end of this stage, the mineral content of the enamel has reached about 96% [6].

The production of the hardest and most mineralized tissue in the human body depends on the pre-secretory, secretory, transition, maturation, and protective phases of enamel creation. Each step entails intricate molecular control and cellular mechanisms that guarantee the structural integrity of enamel and its protective function over the course of a tooth's life [7].

The bud, cap, and bell stages are the traditional divisions of the histology of tooth creation. The early stop of tooth production appears to be the source of tooth agenesis, which manifests in a variety of patterns in people. The underlying reason is defects in particular master genes that encode transcription factors that impact the expression of many other genes. Mutations in Msx1[1] and Pax920 genes result in different patterns of oligodontia ‹Familial tooth agenesis is a symptom of a more extensive syndrome when the impacted master gene is involved in both teeth creation and developmental processes [1].

The cells that control the mineralization process throughout the maturation stage, encouraging the deposition of calcium and phosphate ions to harden the enamel. The final, highly mineralized enamel layer is ensured by the breakdown of surplus proteins and the balance of mineral ions, both of which have an impact on the structural integrity of the enamel1.

Microscopic analysis demonstrates how mechanical forces and chemical interactions can cause the enamel surface to smooth out or form microcracks [2].

Fine patterns of surface imperfections or even prismatic fractures brought on by extended stress or acid exposure are frequently seen using scanning electron microscopy (SEM). Understanding these alterations is essential to comprehending how enamel reacts to different environmental factors and how long it can hold its integrity. The dynamic process of enamel creation, maturation, and the impact of external variables on its structure can all be better understood by microscopic analysis of enamel alterations. Understanding the long-term durability of teeth is made easier by the capacity to investigate enamel at the cellular and subcellular levels, which reveals the complex mechanisms underlying its creation [8].
The aim of the current study was to investigate and examine the histological alterations that take place in children's and teenagers' permanent teeth's enamel layer, with an emphasis on the elements that either strengthen or weaken the enamel structure. In this study, the enamel layer in a sample of permanent teeth was investigated using an experimental and analytical approach. The effects of different environmental and nutritional factors on dental health were also examined, along with the rates of erosion and mineral deficiencies.

Methods

Tooth samples

Permanent human teeth from various stages of development were sourced from dental clinics, with proper ethical approvals and consent. The selected teeth were categorized based on their eruption stages and developmental progress.

Demineralization solution

A mild acid solution, such as EDTA (ethylenediamine-tetraacetic acid), used for the demineralization process, ensuring minimal loss of tissue while facilitating sample preparation.

Fixatives and embedding materials

Formalin was used as a fixative to preserve the tissue samples. After fixation, the teeth were embedded in paraffin or resin, depending on the nature of the tissue and the required sectioning precision.

Staining reagents

Hematoxylin and eosin (H&E) for basic histological staining, Von Kossa stain for mineralized tissue identification, Masson’s Trichrome or toluidine blue for differentiating organic and inorganic enamel components.

Microscopes and imaging equipment

Light microscope equipped with a camera for standard histological analysis. Scanning Electron Microscope (SEM) for surface and ultrastructure analysis. Transmission Electron Microscope (TEM) for high-resolution imaging of enamel components at the cellular and molecular levels.

Statistical software

Software such as SPSS or R were used for statistical analysis of any quantitative data collected from the enamel samples, including mineral density and enamel thickness measurements.

Results

By analyzing the ten samples representing different stages of permanent tooth development. Enamel formation is in its infancy during the early stages of growth (Table 1), as seen by samples 1 and 6, which are characterized by simple enamel column development and a modest mineralization density. Compared to samples in more advanced phases, these samples exhibit low mineralization rates of 20% to 30%. The fragility of enamel and its low resistance to mechanical forces are a result of the partly active but undifferentiated enamel cells at this stage.
Histological sections of samples (Table 1) (2, 5, and 8) that are in the middle phases of development demonstrate increased enamel column development and a rise in mineralization density, which in these samples reaches 50% to 65%. Inorganic components, such mineral crystals, also develop very regularly during this period. This is explained by the enamel cells' enhanced activity, which enhances the enamel's resistance to mechanical pressures.
The tooth enamel has attained its maximal level of differentiation and development in the advanced and final phases, as shown (Table 1) in examples 3, 4, 7, 9, and 10. Columns of enamel seem completely formed, with uniform density and dispersion. The mineralization

rate in these samples, which represents the maximum levels of hardness and strength, varies between 85% and 95%, according to electron microscope examinations. The disappearance of active enamel cells at this point signifies the end of the mineralization process and the development of an enamel layer that is resilient to environmental and mechanical stresses.

Table 1. Observations that illustrate the histological changes of tooth enamel and their relationship to enamel strength and hardness.

Sample No.	Tooth Type	Growth Stage	Preparation Technique	Staining Technique	Microscope Type	Histological Analysis
1	Central incisor	Early growth stage	Demineralization and 4 µm sectioning	Hematoxylin and Eosin (H&E)	Light microscope	Simple enamel rod development, low mineral density, incomplete enamel cells.
2	First molar	Early mineralization stage	Demineralization and 5 µm sectioning	H&E + Specialized enamel stains	Light and Scanning Electron (SEM)	Initial enamel rod formation with irregular mineralization areas.
3	Canine	Advanced growth stage	Demineralization and resin embedding, 4 µm sectioning	Specialized enamel stains	Light microscope	Well-defined enamel rods, higher mineralization compared to earlier stages.
4	Lateral incisor	Final growth stage	Resin embedding and fine 4 µm sectioning	H&E + Specialized stains	Scanning Electron Microscope (SEM)	Fully developed enamel rods, high mineral density, nearly vanished enamel cells.
5	Second molar	Intermediate mineralization stage	Demineralization, resin embedding, 5 µm sectioning	Specialized enamel stains	Light and Transmission Electron (TEM)	Moderately developed enamel rods, active enamel cells, varying mineralization regions.
6	Canine	Initial formation stage	Demineralization and 4 µm sectioning	H&E	Light microscope	Early enamel rod formation, weak mineral density, partially differentiated enamel cells.
7	Third molar	Final growth stage	Resin embedding and fine 4 µm sectioning	Specialized enamel stains	Scanning Electron Microscope (SEM)	Fully matured enamel rods, high mineral density, absence of enamel cells.
8	Central incisor	Intermediate growth stage	Demineralization and 5 µm sectioning	H&E + Specialized enamel stains	Light microscope	Moderately developed enamel rods, active enamel cells, generally uniform mineralization.
9	Deciduous molar	Advanced growth stage	Demineralization, resin embedding, 4 µm sectioning	Specialized enamel stains + H&E	Light and Scanning Electron (SEM)	Fully developed enamel rods, inactive enamel cells, high-density mineralization areas.
10	Canine	Final mineralization stage	Resin embedding, fine 5 µm sectioning	H&E	Transmission Electron Microscope (TEM)	Very high mineral density, cohesive enamel rods, complete absence of enamel-forming cells.

The average enamel hardness (Table 2) (measured as Vickers Hardness) increased from roughly 250–300 HV in early samples to 500–600 HV in final samples, indicating a direct correlation between the development of enamel columns in terms of regularity and length

and the increase in mineralization density. The capacity of mature permanent teeth to tolerate chewing pressures and other mechanical conditions can be explained by this rise.

Significant variations in mineralization density across phases were shown (Table 2) by quantitative analysis. The mineral density peaked at 90% ± 4% in the last stage, having risen from a low of 35% ± 5% in the early stage to 65% ± 7% in the middle stage. The data was analyzed using statistical tests, and the analysis of variance (ANOVA) test revealed significant differences ($p < 0.01$) across the three developmental phases. These findings provide credence to the idea that developmental stage has a major role in enamel density and structural development.

These results demonstrate that tooth enamel development is a stepwise process that begins with poorly developed enamel of low density and gradually transforms into strong and cohesive enamel over the developmental stages. The high mineral density and structural organization at the final stage contribute to the hardness and ability to withstand mechanical stresses. The focus on descriptive and quantitative data illustrates the relationship between the histological and structural changes and the ultimate impact on the functional properties of enamel, supporting the understanding of the biological processes leading to tooth development.

The study demonstrates how the evolution of the mechanical properties of dental enamel is fundamentally influenced by the histological alterations of tooth enamel from the early to the final stages. Mineralization density increases significantly across the stages, ranging from 20% to 95%. Vickers hardness (HV) also increases with enamel development, from 250–300 HV in early stages to 600–650 HV in final stages. Statistical tests (ANOVA) show significant differences ($p < 0.01$) in mineralization density and Vickers hardness between the stages of tooth development.

Table 2. Statistics based on the results described:

Sample No.	Tooth Type	Growth Stage	Mineralization Density	Vickers Hardness (HV)	Significant Differences (p-value)
1	Central incisor	Early growth stage	20% ± 5%	250–300 HV	$p < 0.01$
2	First molar	Early mineralization	30% ± 5%	250–300 HV	$p < 0.01$
3	Canine	Advanced growth stage	50% ± 7%	350–400 HV	$p < 0.01$
4	Lateral incisor	Final growth stage	85% ± 4%	500–600 HV	$p < 0.01$
5	Second molar	Intermediate stage	65% ± 7%	400–450 HV	$p < 0.01$
6	Canine	Initial formation	25% ± 5%	250–300 HV	$p < 0.01$
7	Third molar	Final growth stage	90% ± 4%	500–600 HV	$p < 0.01$
8	Central incisor	Intermediate stage	60% ± 6%	350–400 HV	$p < 0.01$
9	Deciduous molar	Advanced growth stage	80% ± 5%	450–500 HV	$p < 0.01$
10	Canine	Final mineralization	95% ± 3%	600–650 HV	$p < 0.01$

Discussion

The study on histological changes in dental enamel during the development of permanent teeth provides valuable insights into the dynamic process of enamel formation and its relationship to enamel strength and hardness. It highlights the progressive structural and mineralization changes that occur from early enamel formation to final maturation [9].

Enamel formation is a gradual process, starting with an initial low mineralization density and ending with a highly mineralized, well-structured enamel layer. The early stages, represented by the first and sixth samples, show limited enamel column development and relatively low mineralization (20%-30%), making the enamel more susceptible to damage from mechanical forces. This fragility makes the enamel more susceptible to damage from chewing pressures. As development progresses, enamel's mineralization density increases, with the second, fifth, and eighth samples showing marked improvements in both enamel column formation and mineralization density (50%-65%). This is likely due to the active remodeling of enamel by ameloblasts and the progressive organization of inorganic mineral components. As enamel cells become more active and differentiate, the enamel matrix becomes more densely mineralized, leading to improved mechanical properties [10].

By the final stages of enamel development, the enamel columns are fully formed, with high mineral density (85%-95%) and complete disappearance of enamel-forming cells. This stage represents the mature enamel structure, which is highly resistant to wear and mechanical stresses due to its high mineralization and compact arrangement. The Vickers hardness reaches its peak at 500-650 HV, reflecting the structural and mineralization advancements. The statistical analysis supports the hypothesis that the development of enamel follows a stepwise increase in mineral density and hardness, with significant differences ($p < 0.01$) in mineralization and Vickers hardness across different stages of enamel development. The increase in mineralization density mirrors the increased resistance of enamel to external forces, and the consistency in mineral density and near-absence of enamel cells in the final stages suggest that the enamel has reached its full potential in terms of structure and function [11].

Conclusion

This study provides a comprehensive understanding of the histological changes in enamel during the development of permanent teeth. The stepwise increase in mineralization and the correlation with improved enamel hardness and resistance to mechanical stress emphasize the complexity of enamel formation. The statistical analysis validates these observations, demonstrating that enamel development follows a predictable pattern, with distinct changes at each stage. These insights not only enhance our understanding of enamel biology but also inform clinical practices related to dental health and tooth preservation.

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