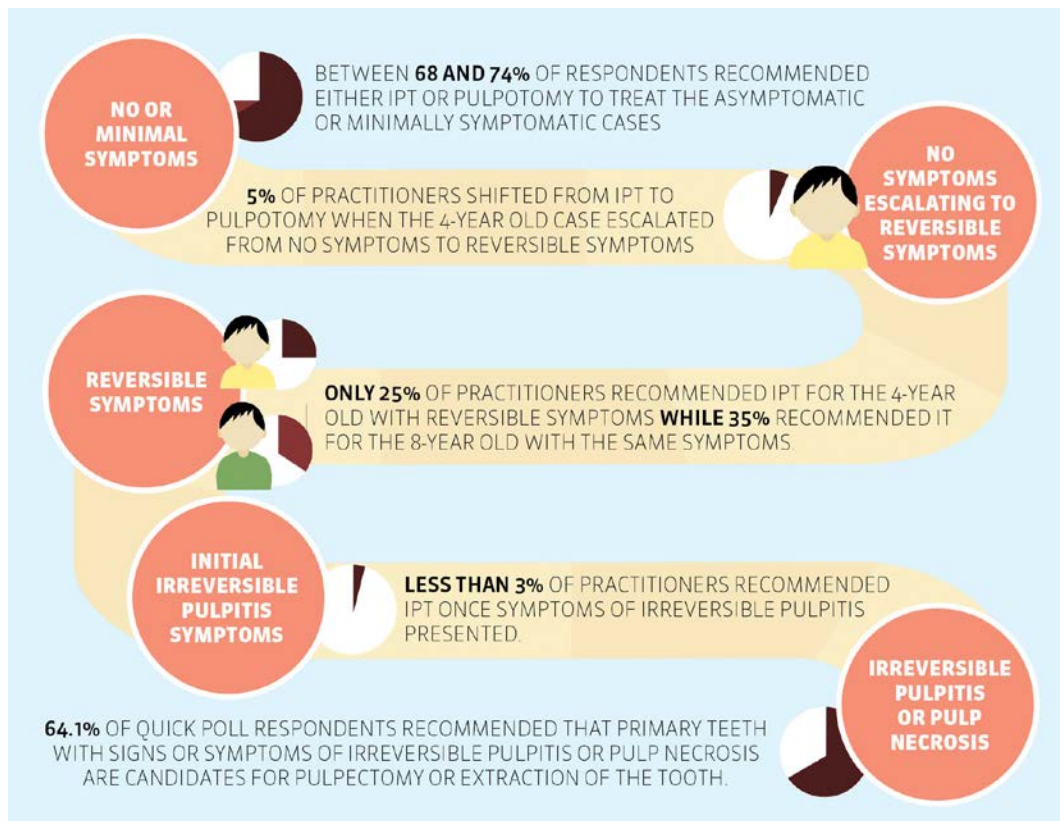


Deep Caries in Primary Teeth

The American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry released in 2017 their first evidence-based guidelines for the use of vital pulp therapy in primary teeth. Many of the respondents to this Quick Poll may have been able to write these guidelines!

Primary teeth with deep radiographic caries that display normal anatomy and minimal symptoms are candidates for indirect pulp therapy (IPT) or vital pulpotomy. The AAPD found evidence at 24m that IPT succeeds 94% of the time and pulpotomy succeeds 82%. The Quick Poll presented a four-year-old and an eight-year-old with deep dental caries and varying levels of symptoms. Between 68 and 74% of respondents recommended either IPT or pulpotomy to treat the asymptomatic or minimally symptomatic cases. When the four-year old case escalated from no symptoms to reversible symptoms 5% of practitioners shifted from IPT to pulpotomy. Only 25% of practitioners recommended IPT for the 4y old with reversible symptoms, while 35% recommended it for the 8y old with the same symptoms. Once symptoms of irreversible pulpitis presented, less than 3% of practitioners recommended IPT.



Primary teeth with signs or symptoms of irreversible pulpitis or pulp necrosis are candidates for pulpectomy or extraction of the tooth, as 64.1% of respondents recommended in the Quick Poll. Extraction was the preferred treatment option (43.2%). Extraction was recommended by less than 10% of respondents for any of the cases with reversible or no symptoms and was recommended the least for the 4y old patient (1-3% of cases). This indicates that practitioners attempt to preserve primary teeth in the arch and become more willing to extract only as a patient gets older and experiences more severe symptoms. However, over 27% of respondents recommended a vital pulpotomy for the case with symptoms of irreversible pulpitis, which does contrast with AAPD guidelines.

Respondents offered many comments, with a need for more information trending as the most common issue. Silver diamine fluoride also presented in multiple comments as an option to arrest asymptomatic caries. Finally, several practitioners noted that if the tooth of the 8y old patient was extracted, they may not need a space maintainer.

