

Dental care habits and oral hygiene knowledge in teenagers and in young people of Ukraine: results from a self-report cohort study.

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Abstract

Introduction: Oral health is a very important component of health throughout life. Poor oral health and untreated oral diseases have a negative impact on the quality of life and can be risk factors for general health. In children, encouraging trends in the prevalence and severity of oral disease have been shown by a reduction of dental caries experience and growing numbers of caries free individuals (Beltrán-Aguilar et al., 1999; Burt, 1994; Marthaler et al., 1996; World Health Organization, 2000). The reasons for this development are complex that may involve a more sensible approach to sugar consumption, improved oral hygiene practices, extensive use of fluoridated toothpaste (Bratthall et al., 1996).

The aim of the present study was to compare data on dental care habits and knowledge of oral health in two epidemiological studies carried out in 2013 in Ukraine. Method and Materials: A population of 464 teenagers 14-16-year-olds and 142 young people 20-25-year-olds were given a structured anonymous questionnaire regarding their dental habits and oral health. Almost the same questions were used in both studies. The teenagers' mean age was $14,9\% \pm 0,93$, the young people's mean age was $21\% \pm 2,01$. Results: among young people $33\% \pm 0,44$ visited the dentist only in case of acute pain, every six months only $27\% \pm 0,48$ visited dentist, $31\% \pm 0,46$ - once a year, $7\% \pm 0,28$ - less than one time in two years. Among teenagers on a regular basis $33\% \pm 0,47$ individuals had appointments every six months in dental service, $40\% \pm 0,48$ - once a year, $7\% \pm 0,28$ - less than one time in two years. The reasons for not attending dental offices with prophylactic aim included: among teenagers fear ($26\% \pm 0,44$ among teenagers and $21\% \pm 0,41$ among young people), absence of acute tooth pain ($60\% \pm 0,49$ among teenagers and $31\% \pm 0,47$ among young people), lack of time ($13\% \pm 0,34$ among teenagers and $46\% \pm 0,5$ among young people). Conclusion: Participants showed extremely low level of knowledge concerning dental care habits and oral health. Dental hygienists and dental doctors should pay more attention to instruction and education in oral hygiene preventive measures. This education should include information about individual oral health care, basics of dental prophylactics, understandable explanation of the need for regular visits to dental services.