

Prevalence and factors affecting poor oral hygiene practice in adolescents

Findings from National Health and Morbidity Survey (NHMS): Adolescent Health Survey (AHS) 2022

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INTRODUCTION

Good oral hygiene practice during adolescence will significantly impact teeth and gum health in adulthood. Oral hygiene practices that are strongly recommended by dentists worldwide include teeth brushing twice daily with fluoridated toothpaste, regular flossing and tongue cleaning, with at least yearly dental check-up. Identifying the prevalence and factors associated with inadequate oral hygiene practice among adolescents can ensure targeted population that can adequately be managed early to decrease the burden of oral and gum diseases of adults. This study aims to estimate the prevalence and identify factors associated with poor oral hygiene practice among adolescents to improve school oral programmes as required.

METHODOLOGY

The National Health and Morbidity Survey (NHMS): Adolescent Health Survey (AHS) 2022 is a nationwide cross-sectional survey with a two-stage randomised stratified cluster sampling involving 240 schools and a total sample size of 36000 adolescents. The dental hygiene questionnaire used was adapted from the Global School-Based Student Health Survey (GSHS) 2012 and NHMS: AHS 2017. Respondents were required to answer a self-administered questionnaire during the study period between June and July 2022, Sample analysis was performed using SPSS version 26.0 with 95% confidence interval.

RESULTS

Total respondents who answered the dental module questionnaire were 33,523 high school adolescents from Form 1 to Form 5.



17.8% did not brush their teeth at least twice a day



53.3% did not use fluoridated toothpaste



55.8% did not practice regular tongue cleaning



78.6% did not practice daily teeth flossing



67.4% did not have yearly dental check-up



5.51% exhibited poor practice in all 5 aspects above

- 66.3% were males (CI: 61.8%, 68.5%),
- 56.7% were Malay (CI: 50.2%, 63.0%)
- 28.3% were Form 1 students (CI: 25.2%, 31.6%)

CONCLUSION

In light of the 2021 Resolution on Oral Health by the World Health Organization, preventive strategies targeting male students, especially those in lower Forms and of Malay ethnicity, should be implemented to ensure good oral health among adolescents to decrease further burden of oral diseases which will carry on to their adulthood.

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