

Decline in obvious decay in children's permanent teeth

Executive Summary of preliminary findings

2003 Children's Dental Health Survey

Obvious dental decay in eight, 12 and 15 year-old children's permanent teeth has decreased since 1983 to its lowest recorded level, according to a survey published today by the Office for National Statistics.

The 2003 Children's Dental Health Survey, commissioned by the four UK Health Departments, is the fourth in a series of national children's dental health surveys that have been carried out every 10 years since 1973 in England and Wales and in the whole of the UK since 1983.

This release presents some preliminary findings from the 2003 Children's Dental Health Survey on experience of dental decay. The full results are due to be published in October and December 2004 in a series of topic based reports.

Key findings include:

- There were no statistically significant changes between the 1993 and 2003 surveys in the proportion of five and eight year-olds with obvious decay experience, or in the proportion having teeth with cavities, in the primary ("milk") teeth.
- The proportion of five and eight year-olds with filled primary teeth has declined since 1983. In both five and eight year-olds filled primary teeth represented a smaller proportion of the total obvious decay experience than in the previous surveys.
- There has been a decrease in the average number of filled primary teeth in both five and eight year-olds. The average number of filled primary teeth in five-year-olds decreased from 0.5 teeth in 1983, to 0.3 teeth in 1993 and 0.2 teeth in 2003 and in eight-year-olds decreased from 1.2 teeth in 1983 to 0.7 teeth in 1993 and 0.5 teeth in 2003.
- In 2003, 62% of 12-year-olds and 50% of 15-year-olds were free from any obvious decay experience in the permanent teeth. Among both 12 and 15-year olds 87% were free from cavities into dentine in the permanent teeth.

- The proportion of eight, 12 and 15 year-olds with permanent teeth with cavities into dentine and permanent teeth with obvious decay experience has decreased. The percentage point fall was particularly pronounced in the proportion of 15-year-olds with cavities into dentine; 42 per cent in 1983, 30 per cent in 1993 and 13 per cent in 2003.
- There was a decrease in the proportion of 12 and 15 year-olds with filled permanent teeth. The proportion of the total obvious decay experience represented by filled permanent teeth among eight, 12 and 15 year-olds has increased since 1993. This indicates an increase in restorative care, i.e. that more obviously decayed teeth had been filled.
- The average number of permanent teeth with cavities into dentine or obvious decay experience among eight, 12 and 15 year-olds decreased between the 1993 and 2003 surveys. In 12 and 15 year-olds the average number of filled permanent teeth also decreased.
- The published Oral Health Targets set for 2003 relating to the condition of children's permanent teeth in England and Northern Ireland were exceeded. However, the targets for primary teeth were not met.

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Preliminary report available on National Statistics website:

http://www.statistics.gov.uk/downloads/theme_health/cdh_preliminary_findings.pdf