

Mind the gap: The oral health essentials that the nation is missing

The British public could be putting their oral health - and even their general health - at risk as new research reveals that millions are overlooking the basic oral health essentials such as brushing, flossing and visiting the dentist.

The annual survey¹, conducted by YouGov on behalf of Simplyhealth Professionals, revealed shocking statistics including that only two thirds of adults brush twice a day (69%), and two percent admitting that they never brush.

Flossing is also frequently ignored, with one in three adults (37%) admitting they never take the time to floss, despite the fact that 63% know that it helps to avoid gum disease. When questioned why they don't floss more regularly, 27% said they couldn't be bothered or find it boring.

Furthermore, almost one in 10 (7%) are avoiding the dental chair and said they never visit the dentist.

Commenting on the figures, Henry Clover, Chief Dental Officer at Simplyhealth Professionals, said: "With the busy lifestyles that people lead, it's tempting to skip brushing or flossing, or delay visits to the dentist. A good oral health routine is an essential everyday activity that helps to protect against tooth decay and gum disease. Moreover, with studies increasingly finding links between poor oral health and conditions

such as heart disease, strokes and diabetes, looking after your oral health is important for your general health too.”

Those adults avoiding the dentist could also be setting a bad example for the younger generation, with over a fifthⁱⁱ (22%) of parents of children aged 18 or under saying their child only brushes their teeth once a day or less, and 2% saying their child never brushes.

Childhood tooth decay continues to be a huge issue in the UK, and remains the number one reason why children aged five to nine years old are admitted to hospital in Englandⁱⁱⁱ. 19% of parents surveyed said their child had at least one filling and, shockingly, 46% saying their child had their first filling when they were seven years old or younger.

Worryingly, the survey also revealed that 83% of adults said they never check their mouths for signs of mouth cancer. With recent figures^{iv} showing that cases of mouth cancer are up by a third in the last decade, and with around 18 people being diagnosed with the disease every day in the UK, the implications of not self-checking could be serious.

“Regular visits to the dentist can help to spot the early signs of mouth cancer, but it’s important to be aware of the symptoms and any changes that you see or feel in your mouth between dental appointments,” explains Henry. “These can include unusual lumps or swellings in the mouth or head and neck area; ulcers that don’t heal within three weeks; and red and white patches in the mouth.”

ENDS

Notes to Editors

ⁱ All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc, on behalf of Simplyhealth. Total sample size was 5,264 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between 12th -19th February 2018. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all UK adults (aged 18+).

ⁱⁱ All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. Parents of children aged 18 years old and under were surveyed; and if there was more than one child in the family, we asked parents to answer based on the child whose birthday fell next. Total sample size was 4,294 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken from 9th to 16th February 2018. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all UK adults (aged 18+)

ⁱⁱⁱ The Faculty of Dental Surgery at the Royal College of Surgeons of England, The state of children’s oral health in England report, January 2015.

^{iv} Oral Health Foundation – www.mouthcancer.org

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