Oral Hygiene among schoolchildren in Ireland

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Summary

HBSC Ireland 2006 has found that 62.5% of schoolchildren in Ireland report brushing their teeth more than once a day (53.5% of boys and 71.9% of girls) which has remained stable since 2002 (61.6%). Tooth brushing more than once a day is higher among younger boys (55.6% of 10-11 year olds and 54.7% of 15-17 year olds) and older girls (67.5% of 10-11 year olds and 76.8% of 15-17 year olds). Children who report brushing their teeth more than once a day are more likely to live with both parents, find it easy to talk to their parents and best friend, like school, have excellent health and be happy with their lives.

Why this topic?

Tooth brushing is vital for maintaining gum health and plaque control which also aids in preventing the two main dental diseases; caries and periodontal disease. It is recommended that the frequency of tooth brushing be at least twice a day\(^2\). Poor oral health is associated with lower life satisfaction and self-esteem\(^3\).

Trends 2002-2006

The overall percentage of children who report brushing their teeth more than once a day has remained stable since 2002 (61.6% to 62.5%). There has been a slight increase among boys (50.2% to 53.5%) whereas figures for girls remain stable (70.1% to 71.9%).

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Further information is available at: http://www.hbst.org http://www.nuigalway.ie/hbsc/
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Fifteen year old schoolchildren in Ireland (boys and girls together) are ranked 24th among 41 countries in Europe and North America with 63% reporting that they brush their teeth more than once a day. Overall, 62% of 11 year olds (ranked 23rd) and 58% of 13 year olds (ranked 30th) report that they brush their teeth more than once a day.

Implications

Overall, among children in Ireland, the number who report brushing their teeth more than once a day remains stable since 2002. Ireland is mid-range in comparison to other European and North American countries. Communication with parents and peers as well as liking school are positively associated with tooth brushing. A substantial minority of schoolchildren in Ireland do not meet the toothbrushing recommendations. Further resources should be allocated to promoting good oral health among all children.

References


This factsheet was prepared by Aoife Gavin, Siobhán O’Higgins, Graham Brennan, Pauline Clerkin, Aingeal de Róiste, Clíona Fitzpatrick, Colette Kelly, Michal Molcho, Larri Walker and Saoirse Nic Gabhainn.