
Canadian Health Measures Survey results – Oral health statistics, 2007-2009

The highlights presented below are taken from Health Canada's *Summary Report on the Findings of the Oral Health Component of the Canadian Health Measures Survey, 2007-2009*.¹ The accompanying technical report provides in-depth analysis of the survey results. Both documents can be found at www.fptdwc.ca/English/e-documents.html.

Oral health statistics, 2007-2009

Oral health refers to the health of one's mouth and teeth. Good oral health is more than just a nice smile—it is an important part of being healthy. Poor oral health and poor oral hygiene affect more than just the mouth and teeth: there is a demonstrated connection between poor oral health and systemic disease such as diabetes in people of all ages and respiratory diseases particularly among older adults. Research also points to possible connections between poor oral health and certain systemic conditions such as heart disease and the risk of having premature, low birth-weight babies. Due to these connections, the significance of maintaining the health of one's mouth and teeth throughout life takes on greater importance.

The results from the Oral Health Component of the CHMS demonstrate that, overall, Canadians pay attention to and have very good oral health:

- Three of every four Canadians visit a dental professional every year;
- Two out of every three Canadians with natural teeth do not need dental treatment.

In terms of Canadians' preventive behaviours:

- 73% report brushing twice a day;
- 28% floss at least 5 times a week.

Canadians were asked how they felt about their oral health:

- 84% report that they have good or excellent oral health;
- 12% avoid certain foods because of problems with their teeth or mouth; and
- 12% report that they have had ongoing pain in their mouth in the past year.

Canadians were asked about mouth pain:

- 16% from the lower income group report that they had pain in their mouth in the past year;
- 17% of current smokers report that they had pain in their mouth in the past year; and
- 18% of those who are publicly insured report that they had pain in their mouth in the past year.

Some of the other highlights from the Oral Health Component of the CHMS are as follows:

- 57% of 6 to 11 year olds have or have had a cavity;
- 59% of 12 to 19 year olds have or have had a cavity;
- The average number of teeth affected by decay in children aged 6 to 19 years old is 2.5;
- 6% of adult Canadians no longer have any natural teeth;
- Although cavities are largely preventable, 96% of adults have had a history of cavities;
- 21% of adults with natural teeth have or have had a moderate or a severe periodontal (gum) problem;

- 34% of Canadians 6 to 79 years of age (who have teeth) had some sort of treatment need identified by the dentists;
- So few children have moderate or severe fluorosis that, even combined, the prevalence is too low to permit reporting. This shows that dental fluorosis remains of low concern in Canada.

The oral health care system in Canada is mostly privately operated, which means the majority of dental practices are owned and operated by dental professionals. Most Canadians pay for their oral health services themselves or through insurance from their place of employment. Some dental services are paid through the public health system, including those covered under the Canada Health Act, or by federal government departments (e.g. dental coverage for First Nations and Inuit) or through provincial/territorial or municipal dental programs across Canada. Studies show that having dental insurance is one of the main factors that determine whether or not Canadians go to see a dental professional for dental care. Results from the CHMS indicate that 17% of Canadians avoided going to a dental professional in the previous year and 16% avoided getting all their recommended treatment done in the same period due to the cost.

The Oral Health Component of the CHMS asked all respondents whether they had insurance or a government program that covered all or part of their dental expenses.

- 62% of Canadians have private dental insurance (usually an employee benefit), 6% have public insurance, and 32% have no dental insurance;
- 78% of respondents from the higher income bracket have private insurance coverage;

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- 53% of adults between 60 and 79 years of age do not have any dental insurance; and
 - 50% of respondents from the lower income bracket do not have any dental insurance.

For more information see
www.healthcanada.gc.ca/ocdo

References

1. Health Canada. Summary report on the findings of the oral health component of the Canadian Health Measures Survey, 2007-2009. Ottawa (ON): Health Canada; 2010 [cited 2010 Jun 1]. Available from: <http://www.fptdwc.ca/assets/PDF/CHMS/CHMS-E-summ.pdf>