

Methods

In Portugal, the First National Health Examination Survey was conducted in 2015. Oral hygiene habits and use of oral health services were assessed in a random sample of 4911 individuals (25 to 74 years old) by personal interview. Brushing teeth 2 or more times per day and before bed was defined as regular teeth brushing and regular visits to the dentist was defined by going to the dentist in the last year before the interview for check-up or routine treatment. Poisson regression was used to estimate adjusted prevalence ratios (aPR) of regular teeth brushing and routine visits to the dentist according to sex, age group, education and employment status.

Results

Regular teeth brushing was reported by 65% of interviewed individuals and 34.2% reported regular visits to the dentist. Women (aPR=1.4 [95%CI 1.3-1.5]) and higher education were associated with regular teeth brushing (aPR=1.7 [1.5-1.9]) and visiting the dentist (aPR=2.5 [2.0-3.1]) while unemployed were less likely to visit the dentist (aPR=0.7 [0.5-0.9]).

Conclusions

Around 2/3 of the Portuguese population reported regular teeth brushing, meaning that 1/3 has inadequate oral hygiene habits.

Public health interventions that focus on the most disadvantaged population subgroups are required to promote better oral health.

Key message:

- Oral Health programs and services should include different socio-economic groups and life course approaches

Inequalities in oral health: Results from the First Portuguese National Health Examination Survey

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Background

Dental cavities and gum diseases are among the most prevalent preventable diseases worldwide. Social determinants play a key role as it is well established that poor health is higher among the most disadvantaged. This study aimed to describe preventive oral hygiene habits of the Portuguese population and assess socioeconomic inequalities in oral preventive care.