Adults and Oral Health

According to research by the Health Policy Institute, dental care utilization has decreased among working-age adults in the past decade. Dental care utilization is measured as a proportion of the population who visited a dentist in the past year. This is a basic indicator of dental care utilization since it does not capture any information on the type of care received, the total amount of care received, or whether a treatment plan was completed. However, it is an informative measure of whether a population is accessing dental care. The Behavior Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) is a system of health-related telephone surveys that collect state data about United States residents regarding their health-related risk behaviors, chronic health conditions and use of preventive services. Results for Texas from the BRFSS 2012 indicate that 58.8 percent of all non-institutionalized adults 18 and older have visited a dentist or dental clinic within the past year. For those adults who indicated that they were diagnosed with diabetes, 47.9 percent have visited a dentist or dental clinic within the past year. Below are select results from the Texas 2012 BRFSS for dental visits by gender, race/ethnicity, diabetes status and other results.

Adults and Oral Health: Dental Visits by Race/Ethnicity, BRFSS 2012

Health disparities is a term that describes a disproportionate burden or risk of death, disease, disability, and ill health on a particular population or group. Oral health disparities are often poorly understood. Of primary concern, is gender. In Texas, results from the 2012 BRFSS indicate that women (62.2%) are significantly more likely to report that they have visited a dentist or dental clinic within the past year compared to men (55.2%).

Inequalities in utilization of preventive care services have been documented with respect to access to and use of dental services. Oral health disparities exist for many racial and ethnic groups. Using results from the 2012 BRFSS, Black and Hispanic adults 18 years and older in Texas are significantly less likely to indicate that they have visited a dentist or dental clinic within the past year compared to White and Other race/ethnic adults ages 18 years and older who stated that they visited a dentist or dental clinic within the past year.

Results from the 2012 Texas BRFSS depict a significant association between years of schooling and dental visits within the past year for adults 18 years of age and older. Those adults with less than a high school education (37.8 percent) reported being significantly less likely to visit a dentist or dental clinic within the past year compared to adults 18 and older who reported completing a high school education (53.0 percent), some college (62.9 percent), or being a college graduate (76.9 percent).

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Current literature has documented that adults with diabetes have a higher prevalence and a more severe form of gum disease, leading to a greater need for dental care and services. Using results from the 2012 Texas BRFSS, adults 18 and older who reported having diabetes were significantly less likely to visit a dentist or dental clinic within the past year compared to adults 18 and older who indicated that they did not have diabetes.

It is well documented that fewer people have dental insurance than have medical insurance, and it is often lost when individuals retire. Reviewing results from the 2012 Texas BRFSS depict a significant association between health insurance status and dental visits within the past year for adults 18 years of age and older. Adults 18 and older that indicated that they did not have any kind of health insurance were significantly less likely to report that they visited a dentist or dental clinic within the past year (38.3%) compared to adults 18 and older who reported that they had health insurance coverage (67.6%).

Smoking and other tobacco products can lead to bad breath, stained teeth, increased risk of periodontal disease and even oral and throat cancers. With proper care, your teeth and gums can stay healthy throughout your life. The healthier your teeth and gums are, the less risk you have for tooth decay and gum disease. To keep your teeth and mouth healthy it is important to visit your dental home at least twice a year for a dental cleaning. Results from the 2012 Texas BRFSS depict a significant association between smoking status and dental visits within the past year for adults 18 years of age and older. Those adults who identified themselves as smokers reported being significantly less likely to visit a dentist or dental clinic within the past year compared to adults who identified themselves as non-smokers.

Resources

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http://www.webmd.com/oral-health/guide/smoking-oral-health