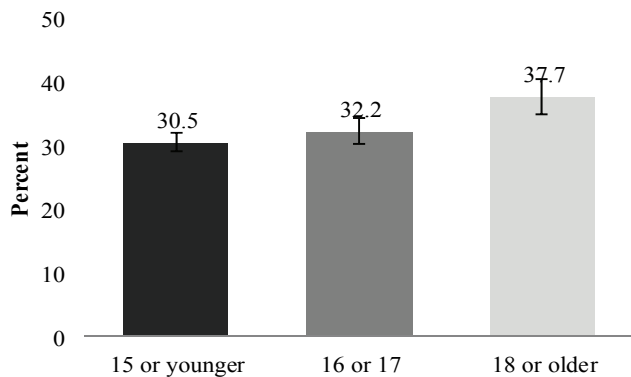


Adolescents and Oral Health

Continued focus on oral health during the adolescent period is important. Many childhood risk factors, such as dental decay, often persist and new oral health risk factors, such as potential tobacco use, may emerge during adolescence. A rise in sex hormones during adolescence may also increase the risk for gum disease. Thus, the adolescent period is an opportune time to educate and motivate teenagers to maintain good personal oral hygiene practices, including dental visits and teeth cleanings. The Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS) is a biennial national survey of high school students (grade 9-12), developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to monitor health risk behaviors related to the leading causes of injury, violence, morbidity, and mortality among youth. Data are weighted to be statistically representative of high school students statewide.

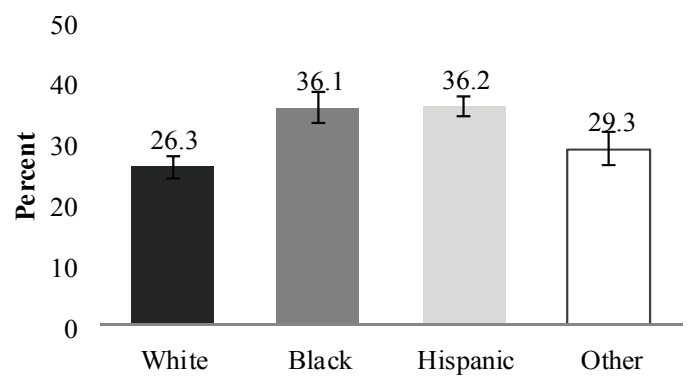
According to results from the 2013 YRBSS, 32.7 percent of Texas high school students reported that they had *not* seen a dentist for preventive services (check-up, exam, teeth cleaning) or other dental work during the past 12 months. Below are the 2013 YRBSS findings for lack of dental visit by age group, race/ethnicity, and other health behaviors. These findings suggest that minority students, students who are older, students who engage in unhealthy behaviors, or who, conversely, do not engage in healthy behaviors, are also more likely to go without dental care. Certainly more awareness is required to identify adolescents at risk for *not* seeing a dentist to ensure good oral hygiene practices and better access to oral health for this group on a regular basis. See YRBSS website at <https://www.dshs.state.tx.us/chs/yrbs/> for survey details.

Lack of Dental Visit by Age Group, YBRSS 2013



When asked about the last time that they had visited a dentist for preventive services or other dental work, 30.5 percent of students 15 or younger and 32.2 percent of students 16 or 17 years of age in Texas high schools indicated that they had not seen a dentist in the past 12 months compared to 37.7 percent of students 18 and older. This data indicates that Texas high school students 18 and older are more likely to go without seeing a dentist than are those who are aged 17 and younger.

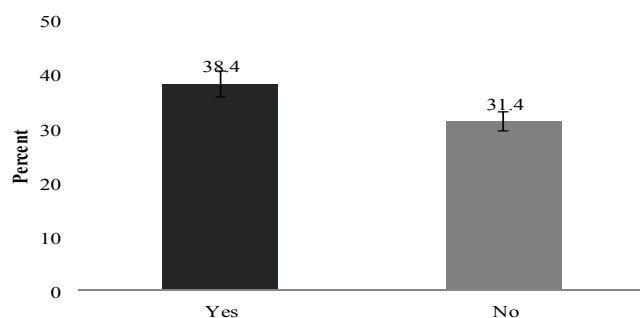
Lack of Dental Visit by Race/Ethnicity, YBRSS 2013



Oral health is one of those aspects of the health care delivery system in which disparities still exist. Minority children are substantially less likely to have access to oral health care than are their non-minority peers. According to results from the 2013 Texas YRBSS, black (36.1%) and Hispanic (36.2%) high school students were significantly more likely to report that they had not seen a dentist in the past 12 months than were White (26.3%) high school students.

Unhealthy Behaviors

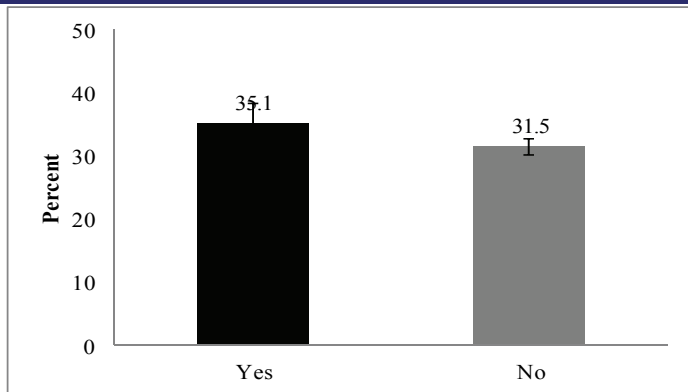
Unhealthy behavior can be defined as any activity undertaken by people with a frequency or intensity that increases the *risk* of disease or injury. Examples of unhealthy behaviors include an unhealthy diet, tobacco use, or unprotected sex.



Lack of Dental Visit and Drinking Soda, YBRSS 2013

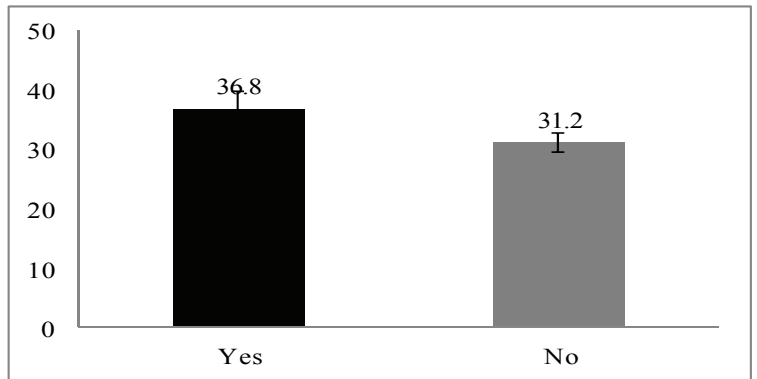
It is well known that there is a strong link between soda consumption and tooth decay. High school students in Texas who reported that they drank a can, bottle, or glass of soda or pop two or more times per day during the past seven days (38.4%) were significantly more likely than those who reported that they had not done so (31.4%) to go without visiting a dentist in the past 12 months.

Lack of Dental Visit and Tobacco Use, YBRSS 2013



Smoking is a major cause of oral cancer. Smoking can lead to bad breath, tooth discoloration, and plaque and tartar on teeth. Texas high school students who indicated that they smoked cigarettes or cigars or used chewing tobacco, snuff, or dip on one or more days of the past 30 days (35.1%) were more likely to report that they had not seen a dentist than were students who reported that they had not smoked.

Lack of Dental Visit and Marijuana Use, YBRSS 2013

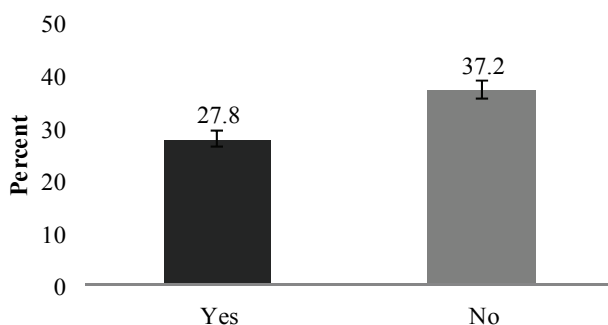


Research confirms an association with poor oral health and marijuana use due to poor diet choices and attitudes about access to care. Marijuana use induces salivary reduction and increases appetite, in particular for cariogenic foods, which in turn can increase the risk of caries. According to results from the 2013 Texas YBRSS, Texas high school students who indicated that they have used marijuana one or more times in the past 30 days (36.8%) were more likely to go without visiting a dentist in the past year than were those who reported that they had not used marijuana.

Healthy Behaviors

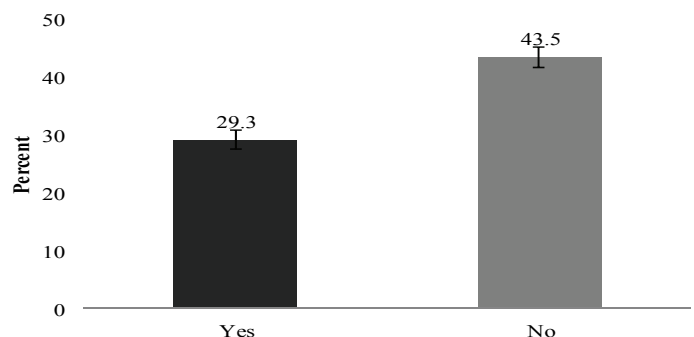
Healthy behaviors are defined as actions taken by a person to maintain, attain, or regain good health and to prevent disease. Examples of healthy behaviors include exercising regularly and performing well at school.

Lack of Dental Visit and Physical Activity, YBRSS 2013



Working out improves overall health which affects oral health. High school students who reported that they had not been physically active for a total of ≥ 60 minutes per day on five or more days of the past seven days (37.2%) were also significantly more likely not to have seen a dentist than were those who reported that they had been physically active.

Lack of Dental Visit and Good School Grades, YBRSS 2013



It has been reported that oral health affects students' academic performance and poor oral health, dental disease, and tooth pain can put kids at a disadvantage in school. Consistent with this notion, high school students who reported that they had not made mostly As and Bs in school in the past 12 months (43.5%) were significantly more likely to forego dental care than were those who had made mostly As and Bs (29.3%).

Resources

IOM (Institute of Medicine) and NRC (National Research Council). 2011. *Improving access to oral health care for vulnerable and underserved populations*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press.

<http://dentistry.usc.edu/2012/08/10/poor-oral-health-can-mean-missed-school-lower-grades/>

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