

China brushes up on better oral hygiene

Dental health shows improvements, with people in cities outperforming those in rural areas

By CHINA DAILY

Chinese people's awareness of oral health has been greatly enhanced in the past 10 years, especially among children and the elderly, a survey released on Sept 19 found.

The results of the fourth national oral health epidemiological investigation were announced by the National Health and Family Planning Commission. The investigation, undertaken in 2016, surveyed 172,000 people of different ages in 31 provincial regions of China.

It found that a few more people have cultivated good habits in taking care of their teeth, compared with past surveys. More than 30 percent of 12-year-old children and 36.1 percent of adults surveyed said they brushed their teeth twice a day in 2016. That is up from 28 percent for 12-year-olds and 32 percent for adults in 2007.

More children have received counsel from doctors about their oral health habits, as well as examinations and treatment.

Children are at high risk of tooth decay because of high sugar intake

and insufficient oral care, data show. The World Health Organization considers 1.2 or fewer cavities — also called caries — in the teeth to be low incidence.

According to the investigation, the average number of cavities for a 12-year-old Chinese child in 2016 was 0.86 — below the WHO threshold and lower than the 1.2 cavities in the United States and 1.4 in Japan. China's cavity count was less than half of South Korea's average of 1.8 for 12-year-olds.

The health authority said elderly people performed better than middle-aged people when it comes to oral health. Elderly people ranging in age from 65 to 74 in China had 22.5 teeth on average, 1.5 more teeth than 10 years ago, which is a major improvement.

However, the rates of gingival bleeding and dental tartar (hardened plaque) among people aged 35 to 44, were 87.4 percent and 96.7 percent respectively, suggesting there is still plenty of room for improvement.

Wang Xing, an adviser for the Chinese Stomatological Association, said the main reasons middle-aged people have worse oral health lies



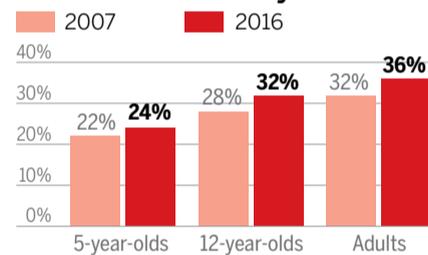
Children check the teeth of a parent on Sept 17 at Hubei Maternal and Child Health Hospital in Wuhan, Central China's Hubei province. National Tooth Care Day falls on Sept 20 every year. Children also learn how to keep their teeth healthy.

MIAO JIAN / FOR CHINA DAILY

Oral hygiene in China

Results of fourth national oral health investigation

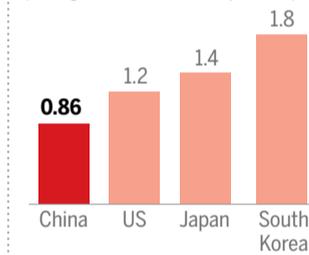
Percentage of people who brush teeth twice a day



Source: National Health and Family Planning Commission

Cavities for 12-year-olds

(Average number of cavities per child)



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in their heavy work stress and insufficient attention.

"Many middle-aged people are buried in work, and are short of time and energy to pay attention to their oral health. In addition, a number of

them don't regard oral diseases as real diseases," Wang said. "They don't attach enough importance to it until they are unable to bear a toothache."

The investigation also shows a gap between cities and villages. People in

cities performed better than those in rural areas in every aspect. In many rural areas, poor people are not able to pay for dental care because the high expenses are not covered by medical insurance.

Chang Jile, an official of the National Health and Family Planning Commission, said the government is working to extend the range of medical healthcare and to establish special programs.

"We have set up several programs aimed at certain oral diseases that will ease people's financial burden," Chang said. "For example, we have helped 12,000 elderly people in poor areas get their teeth filled for free and will continue to do so."

Jiang Chenglong contributed to this story.

Majority clueless on contraception

A recent survey reveals misconceptions among adults on effective ways to avoid pregnancy

By WANG XIAODONG

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More than 80 percent of adults in China have misconceptions about contraception, according to a survey by the All-China Women's Federation.

The survey was released on Sept 20 by Huakun Women's Life Survey Center, which is administered by the federation. World Contraception Day falls on Sept 26 every year.

It was based on questionnaires from 2,378 males and females aged 20 to 40 from all of the country's provinces, municipalities and autonomous regions, and the Hong Kong

Special Administrative Region, said Liu Ping, deputy chief of the center.

Of those surveyed, more than 36 percent said they used withdrawal as a means of contraception, which is ineffective.

Nearly half of the respondents said they believed it is absolutely safe to have sex during a woman's menstrual period, and 5.5 percent believed a female cannot get pregnant if the male did not reach orgasm during sex.

And 3.7 percent of respondents said a woman will not get pregnant if she takes a shower immediately after sex. Nearly 2 percent believed a woman will not get pregnant if the

couple stand during sex.

Education and marriage status did not guarantee knowledge. More than 53 percent of those surveyed hold a bachelor's degree or above, and about 90 percent of them said they are married or have one partner.

More than 17 percent said they or their partners have had an unwanted pregnancy in the past year, and more than 18 percent said either they or their partners had abortions in the past year.

About one-fourth of those said they had no knowledge of oral contraceptive pills at all, and only about 6 percent said they had ever used them.

"Lack of knowledge of contracep-

tion among young people in China can lead to safety risks, including rising numbers of abortions," Liu said.

"We are also sorry to see that women in China generally fail to take active contraceptive measures."

Li Jian, a gynecologist at Beijing Obstetrics and Gynecology Hospital, said lack of knowledge about conception — and preventing it — among the general public has been a major cause of unwanted pregnancy and abortion, which can lead to infertility.

Using condoms properly, taking contraceptive pills or using intrauterine devices can be very effective, Li said, while some actions, such as withdrawal, do not work well.

Wang Qiaomei, an official at the National Health and Family Planning Commission's department for women and children's health, said China has been supplying free contraceptive devices and pills.

Contraception has been included as part of the government's basic public health service programs, Wang noted.

"Medical institutions should provide more contraceptive advisory services to promote the knowledge of contraception," she said.

"We also call on individuals to place more importance on contraception to protect themselves and their family."