2015 NM-YRRS Results: Oral Health Among Youth

Good oral health is a critical component of a child’s overall health and wellbeing. Without it, problems with speaking, eating, playing, and learning can develop and progress to pain, tooth decay, gum disease, and difficulty in school. In addition to at-home preventive care, all children need access to essential preventive and acute care oral health resources to maintain good oral health. The 2015 NM-YRRS high school survey included one question about access to oral health care: “When was the last time you saw a dentist for a check-up, exam, teeth cleaning, or other dental work?” In 2015, 73.5% of participating high school students had seen a dentist during the last 12 months. The NM rate was similar to the US rate (74.4%).

Students who had not seen a dentist in the past year were more likely than other students to engage in other risk behaviors that are associated with poor oral health. Those who had not seen the dentist in the past 12 months were:

- 1.3 times as likely to be current tobacco users (39.5% vs. 31.2%).
- 1.2 times as likely to be current drinkers (30.0% vs. 24.9%).
- 1.6 times as likely to drink three or more servings of soda daily (9.4% vs. 6.0%).

Dental visits were positively associated with parent education, a marker for socioeconomic status. Students whose parents had a college education (81.6%) were more likely to have seen a dentist in the past year than those whose parents had a high school education (74.7%) and those whose parents had less than a high school education (67.6%).

American Indian/Alaska Natives (67.5%), Asian/Pacific Islanders (65.3%), African Americans (69.7%), and Hispanics (73.3%) were less likely to have seen a dentist in the last year than White students (77.8%).

Access to oral health care
Grades 9–12 ■ NM ■ 2015

Not sure 8.2%
Never 2.0%
More than 24 months ago 5.1%
Between 12 and 24 months ago 11.1%
Past 12 months 73.5%


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