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ORAL HEALTH KNOWLEDGE AND PRACTICES IN YOUTH: A COMPARATIVE STUDY

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Given the high prevalence of dental caries and periodontal diseases, it is quite natural that modern dentists strive to use all available preventive methods to reduce the occurrence of dental pathologies and lessen their severity [1]. One of the simplest, most accessible, and at the same time most effective preventive measures remains proper and thorough care of the teeth and oral cavity using the full range of modern oral hygiene products [2].

The high prevalence of dental diseases among young students, due not only to their lifestyle and living conditions but also to the existing system of outpatient dental care, highlights the need to address an important issue: improving the quality and accessibility of dental care for this population. Poor oral hygiene is a key risk factor and the primary cause of the most common dental diseases. Regular and proper oral hygiene contributes 85–90% to maintaining healthy teeth and periodontal tissues [3].

Therefore, the aim of the study was to determine the level of awareness of oral hygiene rules among students at various higher education institutions. A survey was conducted among 400 students aged 17–25 years at universities in the city of Dnipro.

A questionnaire was developed, including questions reflecting various aspects of oral hygiene knowledge:

- the frequency of tooth brushing by students during the day;
- the duration of tooth brushing;
- criteria for choosing a toothbrush and toothpaste;
- types of toothpaste used;
- frequency of toothbrush replacement;

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- regularity of using additional oral hygiene products, such as toothpicks, mouth rinses, chewing gums, interdental stimulators, tongue cleaners, irrigators, dental floss, and floss picks.

According to the study results, 65.25% of students brush their teeth twice a day, 31.25% — once a day; 2.5% do so irregularly, and 1% admitted that they do not brush their teeth at all. At the same time, only 48.75% of respondents spend about five minutes on oral care. Approximately 41% of participants brush their teeth for around two minutes, while 9.25% were unable to specify the duration of the procedure. When choosing a toothbrush, only 23.25% of students rely on the recommendations of a dentist, while the majority prefer to buy models they like in stores, and 25.5% select a toothbrush based on advice from relatives or friends. It is also worth noting the influence of mass media on the population's choice of oral hygiene products. It was found that 99% of students use toothbrushes: 84.25% prefer medium-bristled brushes, 6.25% use soft brushes, and 8.5% use hard brushes. Regarding the frequency of toothbrush replacement, 47.25% of respondents replace their toothbrush every three months, 36.5% — every six months, and 15.25% continue using the same toothbrush for a year. 38.25% of participants choose toothpaste based on advertisements or opt for the cheaper option, 7.5% follow the advice of relatives and friends, and only 27.75% take into account the recommendations of a dentist. Depending on the type of toothpaste, 67% of respondents use therapeutic and preventive toothpastes, while 32% use regular hygiene toothpastes. Among additional oral hygiene products, 91.75% of students prefer chewing gum, and 70.25% use toothpicks. At the same time, the survey results showed that the majority of students either do not use or very rarely use other interdental hygiene products. Thus, only 21% of students use dental floss, primarily 1–2 times a day, even though its use is recommended after every meal. Only 11.25% of respondents use interdental stimulators, and 5% use irrigators. Relying on information from mass media, 71.75% of students use tongue cleaners as part of their oral hygiene routine. Mouth rinses are used by 203 out of 400 respondents, which accounts for 50.75% of the participants. Moreover, the choice of this oral care product is largely influenced by advertising. Only 21% of students use dental floss, primarily 1–2 times a day, although its use is recommended after every meal. Interdental stimulators are used by only 11.25% of respondents, and irrigators by 5%. Relying on advertising information from mass media, 71.75% of students who participated in the survey use tongue cleaners as part of their oral hygiene routine. Mouth rinses are used by 203 out of 400 respondents, accounting for 50.75% of participants. Moreover, the choice of this oral hygiene product is largely influenced by advertising information.

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