

Dental Health

INTRODUCTION

Two indicators are commonly used to describe dental health in a population. The first indicator is the mean number of Decayed, Missing or Filled Teeth (DMFT) for secondary teeth, and decayed, extracted or filled teeth (deft) for primary teeth. This is a measure of the extent or intensity of dental caries in the population.



The second indicator is the proportion of the population who has ever experienced dental caries. This report also uses other indicators, including the proportion of children with untreated decay, with bleeding gums, and in need of urgent dental treatment, to describe the dental health of the children in Peel. The term “urgent treatment needs” is defined as those conditions causing pain and/or infection, or which if left untreated, would lead to pain and infection within a month.

DENTAL INDICES SURVEY

In 1998, the dental health of children in Peel was assessed using the provincial Dental Indices Survey (DIS) protocol. A total of 5,669 Peel children aged four, five, six, 11 and 12 years were part of the DIS in 1998 (see Table 7.1).

Table 7.1—Dental Health Indicators for Children Aged Four, Five, Six, 11 and 12 Years, Region of Peel, 1998

Dental Health Indicators	4 years	5 years	6 years	11 years	12 years	Total
Mean DMFT/deft*	0.6%	1.4%	1.3%	1.8%	1.8%	1.4%
% of children who ever had caries	21%	35%	29%	53%	60%	37%
% of children with untreated decay	17%	27%	19%	23%	22%	25%
% of children with bleeding gums	16%	11%	11%	30%	37%	15%
% of children requiring urgent treatment	6%	16%	17%	12%	16%	15%
Total Number of Children Surveyed	390	3,944	282	748	305	5,699

* The DMFT/deft is defined as the number of missing, decayed or filled tooth surfaces to the number of tooth surfaces examined, and is expressed as a per cent.

Source: Region of Peel Health Department, Dental Indices Survey, 1998.

The mean overall DMFT/deft was 1.4. Among five year olds, the mean DMFT/deft was 1.4, which was slightly higher than the provincial average of 1.2 observed in 1994. Thirty-five per cent of Peel five year olds in 1998 had ever had a cavity compared with 30% of Ontario five year olds in 1994. The proportion of children who had ever had a cavity was even higher for 11 and 12 year olds (53% and 60% respectively).

Among all children surveyed, 37% were found to have ever had dental caries. The prevalence of the disease was highly skewed in that most of the children in Peel who had experienced dental caries also had untreated decay (25%). At the same time, 15% of Peel's children had urgent dental treatment needs and a similar proportion had bleeding gums. Currently, there are no other data available to describe other historical trends or comparisons.

SUMMARY

In 1998, 37% of Peel's children aged four, five, six, 11 and 12 years had ever had a cavity, 25% had untreated decay, 15% had bleeding gums and 15% required urgent dental treatment. In 1994, 30% of children across Ontario had ever had a cavity.