

Overweight kids have fewer cavities, new study shows

April 2 2008

Contrary to conventional wisdom, overweight children have fewer cavities and healthier teeth compared to their normal weight peers, according to a study published in this month's issue of *Community Dentistry & Oral Epidemiology*.

Surprised researchers at the Eastman Dental Center, part of the University of Rochester Medical Center, conducted a secondary analysis of nearly 18,000 children who participated in two separate National Health and Nutrition Examination Surveys (NHANES III and NHANES 99-02).

The study found no differences in rates of caries (tooth decay) among children ages 2-5 in all weight ranges, while children ages 6-18 who were considered overweight and at risk for becoming overweight showed a decreased risk of caries compared to their normal weight peers.

“We expected to find more oral disease in overweight children of all ages, given the similar causal factors that are generally associated with obesity and caries,” said Eastman Dental Center’s Dorota Kopycka-Kedzierawski, DDS, MPH, the lead author. “Our findings raise more questions than answers. For example, are overweight children eating foods higher in fat rather than cavity-causing sugars? Are their diets similar to normal weight peers but lead more sedentary lifestyles? Research to analyze both diet and lifestyle is needed to better understand the results.”

The study defined overweight children as being at the 95th or higher percentile for their age and sex; children at the 85th or higher percentile and less than 95th percentile for their age and sex were defined as at risk for becoming overweight.

Source: University of Rochester

Citation: Overweight kids have fewer cavities, new study shows (2008, April 2) retrieved 18 July 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2008-04-overweight-kids-cavities.html>

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