

Social deprivation sits at the heart of children's oral decay

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Credit: University of Plymouth

A study of 347 children in Plymouth aged between four and six years has shown that social deprivation is an indicator of increased risk of dental decay in children. However, obesity was not associated with decay in this group of children.

The research has been carried out by a team from Plymouth University

Peninsula School of Dentistry, Plymouth City Council and Public Health England and its findings will be presented at the British Society for Oral and Dental Research Annual Conference hosted by the University of Plymouth from 6-8 September.

The study found that while deprivation has a significant impact on tooth decay and obesity, obesity itself was not significantly associated with tooth decay. It also found that dependence on benefits had a significant impact on caries risk in an area, highlighting the impact of the broader environment on [children's health](#).

Furthermore low household income was associated with tooth decay, while the level of education attained by parents affected the frequency at which children brushed their teeth. Specific sugar-laden food and drinks were also found to be a [tooth decay](#) factor.

Martha Paisi, Post-Doctoral Research Fellow in Public Health Dentistry, led the study with Professor Liz Kay MBE.

Professor Kay said, "40,970 surgical procedures were carried out on children for their teeth in 2014-15 at a cost of £35 million, all to address a health problem which is entirely preventable.

Paisi said, "Our research highlights the [impact](#) of the broader environment on children's health and the need to prioritise children from disadvantaged neighbourhoods in the development of programmes to prevent [dental decay](#)."

The research will be presented at the British Society for Oral and Dental Research Annual Conference on Friday 8 September at 9.30am.

Provided by University of Plymouth

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