

Cost keeps many Americans from good dental care: report

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While most said their teeth were in good shape, many did not visit dentist regularly.

(HealthDay) -- Although most Americans say their teeth are in relatively good shape, a newly published survey reveals that many are not getting routine dental checkups, with cost cited as the most common obstacle.

The findings stem from the responses of more than 17,000 men and women, aged 18 to 64, across the United States, according to the U.S. [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)'s National Center for Health Statistics report.

Among the results gleaned from the 2008 survey, the researchers found that roughly 75 percent of participants said their oral health was either good or very good, while 17 percent and 7 percent, respectively, described their [dental health](#) as fair or poor.

Oral health appeared to differ by the type of insurance people had, with Medicaid recipients running a five times greater risk for poorer dental health than those with [private coverage](#). Adults on Medicaid were two times more likely than other adults to have *not* visited a dentist in more than a half-decade (21 percent versus 12 percent).

Race also appeared to play a role, as whites and Asians were more likely to have good oral health (37 percent) than either [Hispanics](#) or blacks (25 percent and 26 percent, respectively). Education was also cited as a factor, with college graduates significantly more likely to be in good dental shape than those with less than a [high school diploma](#).

The poll further revealed that six in 10 adults had paid a visit to the dentist in the previous year. Among those who did not, cost appeared to be the largest impediment to getting a checkup, with the expense of a dental visit named as the main reason for not seeing a dentist in the prior six months.

On that score, 42 percent of survey participants said that they either did not have dental insurance and/or they could not afford to get their teeth treated.

Money issues aside, fear was cited by 10 percent as the primary reason not to cross a dentist's threshold.

The CDC's National Center for Health Statistics published the results of the survey July 18 in *Vital and Health Statistics*.

More information:

For more on dental visit recommendations, visit the [American Dental Association](#).

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