

Infectious Smiles

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Obesity and the risk of dental caries

Localised demineralization of hard tissue of the teeth, due to acid produced from food debris or sugar is referred to as tooth decay or dental caries.¹

The association between dental caries and obesity was examined in a recent study of Korean adults.¹

Song and colleagues analysed data from the Korea National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, collected between 2008 and 2010.¹ They evaluated a range of lifestyle and sociodemographic variables alongside obesity, sarcopenia and metabolic syndrome indices.¹ Dental caries index (DMFT) was also considered, defined as the sum of decayed, missing and filled teeth.¹

“ Severity and occurrence of dental caries was inversely associated with obesity.¹ ”

The researchers observed that the DMFT was significantly inversely associated with both body mass index and body fat quartile.¹ Other variables associated with a lower risk of dental caries included:¹

- being male
- current smokers
- heavy drinkers (>30 g alcohol/day)
- high education level (more than 13 years of school)
- satisfactory oral self-health reports.

Song and colleagues also identified factors associated with a higher rate of dental caries:¹

- annual dental visits
- mastication problems
- high frequency of daily tooth brushing.

In this study of Korean adults, being overweight or obese was inversely associated with the occurrence of dental caries.¹ However, these results are controversial compared to previous studies.¹ The researchers highlighted that larger longitudinal studies would be required to fully understand the causes of such a link.¹

References

1. Song IS, Han K, Ryu JJ, Park JB. Obesity is inversely related to the risks of dental caries in Korean adults. To be published in Oral Diseases; [Preprint] 2017.

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