

## Oral and Dental diseases

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Dental caries or cavities, more commonly known as tooth decay, are caused by a breakdown of the tooth enamel. This breakdown is the result of bacteria on teeth that breakdown foods and produce acid that destroys tooth enamel and results in tooth decay. Although dental caries are largely preventable, they remain the most common chronic disease of children aged 6 to 11 years and adolescents aged 12 to 19 years. Tooth decay is four times more common than asthma among adolescents aged 14 to 17 years. Dental caries also affects adults, with 9 out of 10 over the age of 20 having some degree of tooth-root decay. Water fluoridation, named by CDC as one of the ten great public health achievements of the 20th century, has been a major contributor to the decline of the rate of tooth decay. Studies have shown that water fluoridation can reduce the amount of decay in children's teeth by 18-40%. In addition to fluoridated water, good oral hygiene can help prevent tooth decay:

- Brush twice a day with a fluoride toothpaste
- Clean between your teeth daily with floss or interdental cleaner
- Eat nutritious and balanced meals and limit snacking
- Visit your dentist regularly for professional cleanings and oral examination
- Check with your dentist about use of supplemental fluoride, which strengthens your teeth, and about use of dental sealants (a plastic protective coating) applied to the chewing surfaces of the back teeth to protect them from decay

Most of the visually impaired individuals require the help of others to accomplish their task round the clock. The amplitude of oral health problem in disabled people is worse when compared to general population and disabled people have more untreated dental diseases and problems in accessing dental care [4]. Dental caries is a common unmet problem among disabled population. The aetiology of dental caries is presence of plaque and

calculus. It is better understood when witnessed rather than when informed. Presence of plaque and calculus is not well untangled to visually impaired people, as it is difficult to explain using disclosing agent. Maintenance of oral hygiene prevents dental caries. However oral hygiene instructions given to normal individuals using visual aids such as tooth brushing models and demonstration of flossing do not well reach visually impaired people. Blind people fail to recognize dental caries at initial stage such as presence of discolouration or cavity formation. They become aware only after experiencing pain or any discomfort. Negligence in treating caries at initial stage eventually results in loss of teeth. Tooth plays an important role in the oral cavity, loss of which affects the mastication, aesthetic, speech, and even self-confidence. A comparative oral health study between blind and normal school children resulted in 60% prevalence among blind children and only 31.5% in normal school children [5]. In addition, it is common among visually impaired population to prioritise their oral health as less important than the general health and well-being. A Chinese study also found that 92% of visually impaired patients did not have regular access to a dentist, and therefore it was found that 85% of those patients had periodontal pockets, of which 31% percent suffered from deep pockets [6]. Therefore, it is imperative as a public health response to conduct effective oral health promotion programs through adequate oral education and practical demonstration in a way that could help visually impaired individuals to maintain optimum oral hygiene. There have been numerous studies of oral health status of school children and young population; however, similar studies in elderly population in India are lacking. With advances in medical science and consequent increase in life expectancy, elderly population is on the rise and is a subject of growing concern for public health policy. Hence, an attempt was made to study factors influencing decayed, missing, and filled teeth (DMFT) index, oral health awareness, and dental treatment-seeking behavior of elderly population.

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