

Causes and pattern of missing permanent teeth among Kenyans.

Abstract:

To determine the causes and pattern of missing permanent teeth among Kenyans. **DESIGN:** A descriptive cross-sectional study. **SETTING:** Five districts in Kenya. **SUBJECTS:** Seven hundred and twenty two persons aged 6-85 years (346 males and 376 females). **METHODS:** This study was undertaken in October 2001 during the National Dental Health Action Month organised by the Kenya Dental Association. Six centres in five districts were identified and subjects randomly selected. Intra-oral examination was done visually and results were recorded on specially designed clinical examination forms. **RESULTS:** The mean number of missing teeth in the population was 1.60. Among those with missing teeth, the mean number of missing teeth was 3.35. The most commonly missing teeth were lower molars followed by upper molars. No record of complete edentulousness in both jaws was encountered. Dental caries was the commonest cause of tooth loss (52.6%), followed by periodontal disease (27.6%). Extractions, as a form of traditional practice, accounted for 12.3% of total tooth loss. Orthodontic treatment and trauma accounted for 2.2% and 2.0% respectively of total tooth loss. The upper and lower posteriors were the commonest teeth lost due to dental caries and periodontal disease. Teeth lost due to trauma were mostly upper anteriors, whereas those extracted due to traditional practices were exclusively lower anteriors. **CONCLUSION:** The findings of this study show that the commonly lost teeth are molars and the principal cause of tooth loss is dental caries followed by periodontal disease. Overall, very few extractions had been done for orthodontic reasons