

Abstract

Background: Several behavioural studies have shown a direct correlation between oral health awareness and practices. Awareness of individuals regarding their periodontal health status when accompanied with knowledge about the periodontal disease process can help improve self oral healthcare and prevent periodontal diseases.

Objective: To describe the knowledge on aetiology, prevention of periodontal disease and the oral health practices among 12 year-old children.

Design: Descriptive cross-sectional study.

Setting: Eight out of 16 primary schools in Kitale municipality.

Results: Majority of the children 197(67.5%) brushed their teeth among whom 109(55.3%) brushed their teeth three times a day, 43(21.8%) brushed twice a day and 45(22.8%) brushed once a day. Out of the children who brushed their teeth, 104(52.8%) started brushing their teeth before joining primary school while 53(26.9%) started brushing their teeth in primary school. A small number of children 29(14.7%) did not remember when they started brushing their teeth. Out of those children who brushed their teeth, 127(64.5%) used a toothbrush, 33(16.8%) used 'miswaki' and 32(16.2%) used both toothbrushes and 'miswaki'. Among those who brushed their teeth, 173(87.8%) used toothpaste while 24(12.2%) did not use any. Less than half of all the children interviewed (36.3%) had visited a dentist before. Most of the children (18.2%) who visited a dentist went for tooth extraction, 6.8% for tooth cleaning and 4.1 % for filling. A very small number of children (5.1 %) went for check-up. Majority of all the children interviewed (69.9%) had moderate oral health knowledge while only a few children (8.9%) had poor information.

Conclusion: A large number of children carried out oral hygiene practices. Majority of those children who brushed their teeth started cleaning their oral tissues before joining primary school, possibly a result of parental influence. The utilisation of dental healthcare services was low among the children in the study.