

DMFT index among children aged 12 from primary schools in Republic of North Macedonia (RNM) participating in a national oral health preventive program

**BACKGROUND:** The Decayed, Missing and Filled Teeth (DMFT) index is a cumulative caries measure indicating past and present dental caries occurrence. This value is widely applied to assess dental caries status at the population level for public health planning and policymaking purposes.

**AIM:** Determination of DMFT among children aged 12 to assess the National Strategy's preventive measures' effectiveness.

**METHOD:** A cross-sectional study undertaken in RNM in Sept-Oct 2019 with 7169 children (3117 males and 3050 females) aged 12 selected randomly from all 8 regions, urban and rural areas and all ethnicities. Calibrated examiners using WHO criteria to diagnose dental caries performed clinical examinations within the regular preventive ones for primary school students; therefore, no ethics committee approval was required. The DMFT index was used for data analysis and was recorded in the Oral Health Assessment Form for Children as per WHO's recommendation.

**RESULTS:** The results showed a DMFT of 2.43 (1.58-2.95 regional variance); a significant decrease compared to the period before the National Strategy implementation in 2007 when DMFT was 6.9.

**CONCLUSION:** This DMFT value is on the upper limit of a low level of caries (1.2-2.6, WHO). It is necessary to expand the focus of preventive activities provided by the National Strategy, especially in young and preschool children, by sealing primary molars and promoting a well-balanced diet for all children and parents. Namely, reducing consumption of sugars and carbohydrates and brushing teeth twice a day with fluoride toothpaste as the most effective preventive measures.

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