

Caries prevalence and treatment needs in young people in Portugal: the third national study

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Objective: To evaluate caries prevalence and dental treatment needs in Portuguese children and teenagers, as well as fluorosis prevalence in 12-year-old children, in order to address public oral health program strategies. **Participants:** A representative stratified random cluster sample of 3,710 participants of 6, 12, and 18 years old was selected. A questionnaire was applied to determine sociodemographic data and some oral health determinants. The clinical examination was based on the ICDAS criteria, then adapted to DMFS index, and Dean's index for fluorosis. **Results:** Caries prevalence at 6, 12, and 18 years old was 45.2%, 47.0%, and 67.6%, respectively. D₅MFT scores were 1.18 (SD 0.06) and 2.51 (SD 0.10), respectively. Treatment needs at 12 and 18 years old were associated with 0.37 (SD 0.03) and 0.75 (SD 0.06) values in the “decayed” (D_c) variable. SiC index at 12 years old was 2.68 (SD 1.68). Sealants were identified in 55% of 12-year-old children and the mean of sealants per individual was 3.61; also, moderate (2.2%) and severe (0.2%) levels of fluorosis were detected. **Conclusions:** The oral health situation in Portugal is favorable for young people, resulting in low treatment needs. The National Oral Health Promotion Program should be extended to include 18-year-olds.

Key words: epidemiology, dental caries, fluorosis, oral health, oral health promotion, national survey, children, adolescents, Portugal