Purpose

Our purpose was to examine the dental health practices and needs of low-income persons to inform nutrition education programs.

Methods

Study Design: Cross-sectional survey determined to be exempt upon review by the Institutional Review Board of The Pennsylvania State University, administered as part of the evaluation of the digital photo frame program, Eating for Healthy Teeth and A Great Smile. Participants were recruited from 18 Pennsylvania Free Clinics. Participants (n=93; mean age 41.2 ± 12.3 y) were white (97%) mostly female (71%), overweight/obese (74%), concerned about having enough money for food (77%), dental health is vital to nutrition health. Our purpose was to examine the need for dental care by limited-income adults.

Results:

- half (43%) did not have a family dentist
- Nearly two-thirds (63%) did not have dental insurance
- Nearly half (43%) did not have a family dentist
- Most frequently used assistance program was SNAP (34%) (Reported as fairly often or very often)

Conclusions and Implications:

- Dentists are for children too.
- For strong teeth and bones, include milk, cheese, and calcium-rich foods.
- Chewing creates saliva.
- This protects plaque from acids.
- Popular drinks have added sugars.
- To protect your baby’s teeth and prevent decay.
- Dental health practices for this sample recruited from low-income venues were not adequate for nutritional health. Poor dental health affected quality of life and nutrition practices especially in food insecure persons. Dental health education is a vital component of nutrition education for low-income persons.

References