

## Gender Differences in Oral Health in the Swiss Adult population

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**Background and purpose:** Little research addresses gender differences in oral health beyond pregnancy (Covington 1996, Steinberg 2000). The aim of this study was to investigate gender differences with regard to oral health and oral health behaviour in the Swiss adult population, using data from the Swiss health Survey of 2002.

**Methods:** The Swiss Health Survey regularly collects detailed information on health and health determinants of a random sample of the Swiss population above age 15. A written questionnaire including items on oral health was filled in by 7'115 men and 9'026 women in 2002. Weighted prevalence rates were calculated, and multivariate logistic regression analyses used to evaluate the role gender.

**Results:** Women had a higher prevalence of dentist visits in the last 12 months (64% versus 60% in men) and of dental hygienist visits (39% versus 34%). Complete dentition was reported by 48% of women and 52% of men. 82% of women and 66% of men are brushing their teeth several times per day. Adjusting for socio-demographic and life style factors in multivariate analyses, female gender was associated with the prevalence of dentist visits (OR 1.33, 95%CI 1.24-1.43), dental hygienist visits (OR 1.48, 95%CI 1.37-1.59), and brushing the teeth several times a day (OR 2.57, 95%CI 2.36-2.79), but not with having a complete dentition (OR 1.01, 95%CI 0.93-1.09).

**Conclusions:** Adult women have a more pronounced preventive oral health behaviour than men, however, their dentition is not more often complete.