

Abstract

Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on preventive dental behaviors among college students

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Oral health has been impacted by COVID-19 directly (leading to conditions including xerostomia, taste dysfunction, and oral mucosal lesions) and indirectly (leading to 46.7% of U.S. young adults postponing dentist appointments). Maintaining preventive dental behaviors such as tooth brushing, flossing, and dental checkups, is critical to minimizing these oral health complications, especially for college students who are at higher risk during the COVID-19 pandemic. **PURPOSE:** To assess the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on preventive dental behaviors among college students. **METHODS:** A sample of 550 college students (age: 18-25 years; 69.8 % female) completed an online survey. Descriptive statistics were calculated for demographic and COVID-19 variables and the prevalence of preventive dental behaviors. Also, chi-square was applied to evaluate the impact of COVID-19 on college students' preventive dental behaviors. **RESULTS:** 71.5% of the participants received the COVID-19 vaccine, out of which 97.7% were fully vaccinated. The majority of participants met the recommendations for teeth brushing (61.4%) and dental checkups (59.4%), but only 19.4% met the flossing recommendation. Although most of the participants (about 80~89%) claimed that the COVID-19 pandemic had no influence on their preventive dental behaviors, a considerable number still reported positive and negative influences of COVID-19 on their behaviors. **CONCLUSION:** College students' preventive dental behaviors were not easily influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic, but a program for promoting preventive dental behaviors during the pandemic time would be beneficial.

