

# Oral health status of hearing impaired people and challenges they face while trying to access dental care.

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## Introduction

Oral health care is the most common unmet need among individuals with a disability. Individuals with a disability may have compromised oral health needs due to neglect from parents, socioeconomic problems, and communication barriers. The hearing impaired people are among those disabled people who face difficult of accessing oral health care. Hearing loss rank third among disabilities and according to its etiology it can be genetic, congenital or acquired. Hearing impairment can be classified as conductive, sensorineural, mixed or central according to its location. In Rwanda little is known about oral health status among hearing impairment people but some studies has been done across the word.

## Oral health status among healing impairment people

A cross-sectional study conducted from November 2020 to April 2021 on hearing-impaired students in Amhara region, Ethiopia shows that a total of 149 hearing impaired students with an age range of 7–30 years who were involved in the study; The prevalence of periodontal disease and dental caries was 22.8% (95% CI: 16.8, 30.4) and 38.9% (95% CI: 32.2, 46.9) respectively. Being grade 1–4 student (AOR = 3.94, 95% CI: 1.16, 13.38), lack of formal education (AOR= 4.98, 95% CI: 1.00, 24.65), dental caries (AOR = 2.51, 95% CI: 1.08, 5.08) and bleeding on probing (AOR = 9.98, 95% CI: 3.69, 26.64) were statistically significant with periodontal diseases. Grade level, parents' support during brushing, oral health status, and medication intake were independent factors for dental caries [1].

Also, a study conducted in Gulbarga district in south India shows that A total of 284 children were examined, aged 6–24 years, with a mean age of 12.95 years ( $\pm 3.13$ ). The prevalence of dental caries was 49.3%, and 87.4% of the children suffered from periodontal disease. Oral hygiene status was poor in 24.7% of the children [2].

This is nearly the same as study done in northeast china May 2022. A total of 118 visually impaired students and 56 hearing impaired shows that the prevalence of dental caries in visually impaired and hearing impaired students was 66.10% and 66.07%. The mean number of DMFT, prevalence of gingival bleeding and dental calculus in visually impaired students were  $2.71 \pm 3.06$ , 52.08% and 59.38%, respectively. The

mean number of DMFT, prevalence of gingival bleeding and dental calculus in hearing impaired students were  $2.57 \pm 2.83$ , 17.86% and 42.86%, respectively [3].

## Challenges faced by hearing impaired people while trying to access dental care

There is considerably lack of knowledge about how dental care should be provided for hearing loss patients, as they are a very specific group among disability people. As result of this communication barrier, hearing impaired people have become a remote population when it comes to getting medical and dental care. They lack access to education and preventive measures in oral health, not receiving adequate and worth treatment. Specifically, it is suggested that dental practitioners need to attend sing language courses which is usually free or have very low cost. Health professionals can get in touch with associations of hearing loss people and use some of the few current available technological tools to facilitate communication with hearing loss patients [4].

## Conclusion

Multiple studies show a significant amount of hearing impaired people had periodontal disease and dental caries. Also though sign language has been officially accepted in several countries, as the normal means of communications for the hearing loss community, has no measure to discourse this problem have been applied in health care service.

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