

More Black Kids Seeing Dentists, But They Get Worse Care Than Whites

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Although African-American and white children currently see their dentists at almost equal rates, more needs to be done to make sure black kids get better quality care, according to a study published in the journal *Pediatrics* and reported by [HealthDay News](#).

For the study, researchers used data from five U.S. National Health Interview Surveys, administered between 1964 and 2010, to track trends in children's dental care. Scientists focused on children ages 2 to 17 and reviewed whether or not they'd visited a dentist in the past year.

Findings showed the percentage of black and white children who had not seen a dentist in the past year dropped from about 52 percent in 1964 to 22 percent in 2010. What's more, the percentage of kids who had never seen a dentist dropped from nearly 34 percent in 1964 to 11 percent in 2010.

"We imagine that some of the government programs targeted to these children may have contributed to narrowing the gap," said Inyang Isong, an instructor in pediatrics at Massachusetts General Hospital, in Boston, and the study's lead author. (Such programs include Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program.)

Despite the good news, findings also showed that African-American children weren't receiving the same type of dental care services as their white peers, even though they had similar access to oral health services. In addition, black kids had more cavities than white children.

Why? Well, some doctors believe this disparity may be caused by diet, the availability of sugary drinks, and the poor quality of dental care that low-income African-American children might receive.

The good news is doctors also think almost all childhood oral health problems are preventable. That means these study findings should prompt doctors to redouble their efforts to provide preventive dental care to children.

Did you know that racial gaps exist in other areas of health too? [Click here](#) to find out more.
