

The York Region Public Health Dental Program

SERVICE DESCRIPTION

Following Ontario Public Health Standards, the York Region Public Health Dental Program monitors oral health status of children living in York Region and provides preventive services and oral health screening in a number of settings, including elementary schools, Public Health dental clinics and community venues such as Ontario Early Years Centres.

Eligible children with dental needs are referred to the Healthy Smiles Ontario (HSO) program for preventive services, such as cleaning, pit and fissure sealants and fluoride treatment; they may also be referred for regular or emergency dental care. In 2018-2019, our teams conducted **55,475** dental screenings at **278** elementary schools and four Public Health dental clinics. Preventive services were provided to **1,649** children in our clinics.

OUR CLIENTS: Children 17 years of age and under

OUR VISION: “All children, youth and families in York Region will achieve optimal health and well-being.”

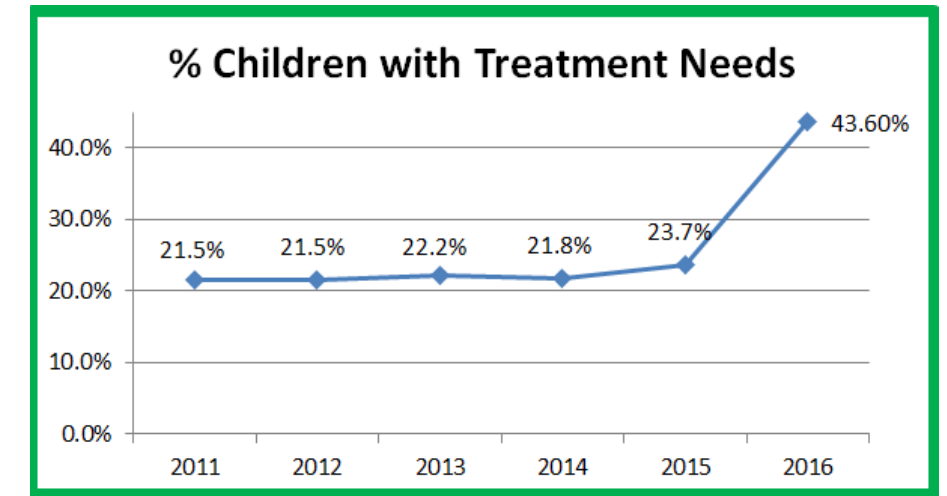
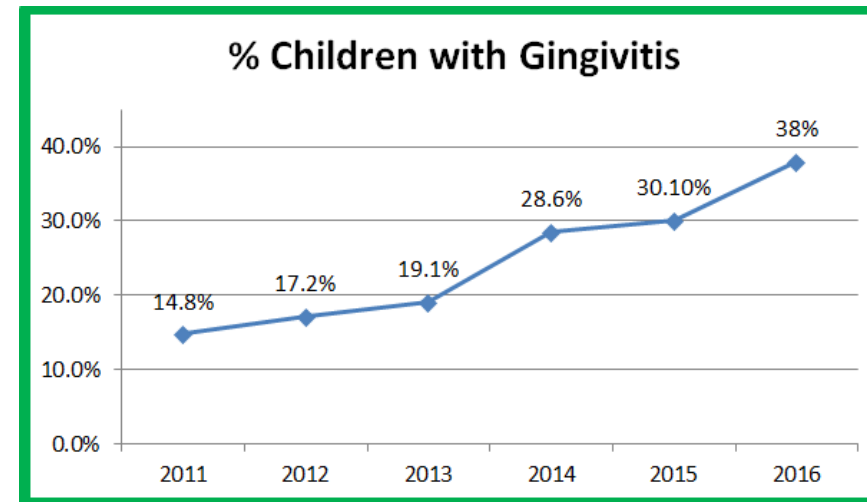
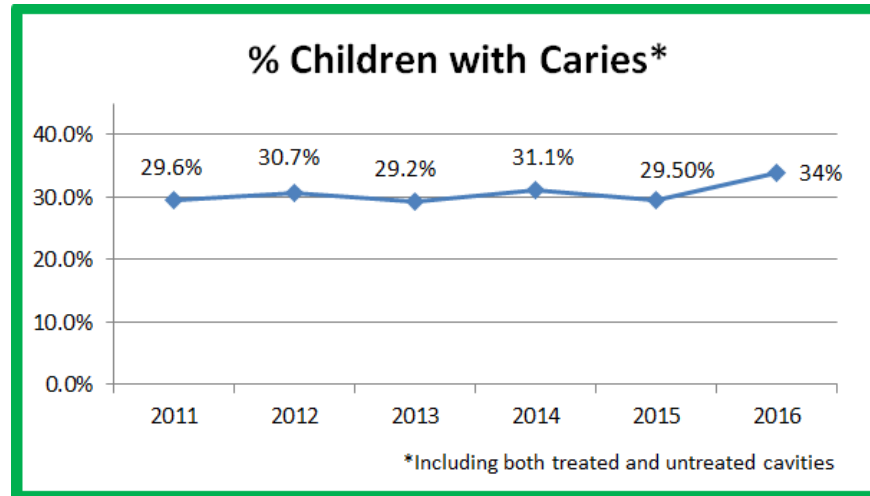
MEASURING THE ORAL HEALTH OF YORK REGION CHILDREN

1. Percentage of children with dental caries (cavities)
2. Percentage of children with gingivitis (gum disease)
3. Percentage of children with dental treatment needs

WHAT ELSE DO WE NEED TO KNOW?

1. Who and where are the young children at high risk of developing cavities?
2. How many high school-aged children require dental treatment?
3. What is the status of adult oral health (including seniors) in our Region?

ORAL HEALTH OF CHILDREN IN YORK REGION



STORY BEHIND BASELINE

- Oral health is important for overall health and well-being
- Poor oral health can lead to pain, difficulty eating and sleeping, speech problems, poor overall health and higher risk of tooth decay in later years
- Dental caries is a preventable disease that has an impact on health and well-being
- Gum disease (gingivitis) is another preventable disease. It can be avoided by brushing teeth twice a day and flossing daily
- Data shows (as seen in the charts above) that there is a need to improve the current trend in children’s oral health. There is an increase in the percentage of children with dental treatment needs, specifically preventive needs, as well in the percentage of children with gum disease
- Due to changes in the eligibility criteria mandated by the Ontario Public Health Standards, there was an increase in the number of children identified with dental needs and preventive dental services offered in 2016-2017
- Prevention is key in the fight against cavities. Daily brushing and flossing routines, as well as food and drink choices that are more dentally healthy, are important prevention strategies. Access to care by dental professionals is also crucial. The first dental visit should be by first birthday and regularly thereafter
- Dental treatment is costly and difficult to access for many families, especially those with limited or no dental coverage
- Children of families that cannot afford dental treatment may be eligible for coverage under the HSO program. York Region Public Health works with over 700 dentists in our community who treat children under the HSO program
- The HSO program has expanded criteria to identify more children in need of preventive treatment, such as topical fluoride, sealants, scaling and recall visits. York Region Public Health ensures that eligible children have access to the preventive treatment they need through our dental clinics, located in four different locations across the Region

OUR PARTNERS

The Ministry of Health, dentists, registered dental hygienists, Child and Family Health programs, other York Region Public Health programs, primary care providers, School Boards, Ontario Early Years Centres, Regional Welcome Centres, Children’s Aid Society, shelters, York Paramedic Services, libraries and community centres

WHAT CAN WE DO BETTER?

- Increase collaboration with other York Region programs, integrating more oral health promotion into a variety of health and social service messaging to increase awareness about the importance of children’s oral health
- Recognize and address barriers to oral health services
- Expand partnership with health care providers to achieve common goals in improving our community’s oral health, for example an emphasis on “First Dental Visit by First Birthday” for all children
- Continue using available data to create better informed community interventions
- Increase communication with community through health promotion activities
- Determine and link at-risk preschool children with oral health treatment and programs
- Advocate to provide dental services for all adults without dental coverage, who are in financial hardship, as current local funding through social services is limited