

Oral assessment of children with autism spectrum disorder in Rawalpindi, Pakistan

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It is difficult for children with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) to maintain their oral hygiene (the process of keeping one's teeth clean and healthy through regular cleaning) because of dependence on their caregivers. This combined with typical dietary habits, may predispose these children to having more dental problems. There are very little published data about oral health problems in children with ASD in Pakistan. This study was done to compare the oral health, dental needs and dietary habits of Pakistani children with ASD and their siblings. Parents completed a questionnaire regarding the children's oral hygiene measures, dietary habits and past dental experiences. A dental examination was also carried out. It was found that the children with ASD had greater dental needs and were more prone to developing dental problems as compared to their siblings. The main reasons for this were a lack of frequent brushing and the child's inability to brush their teeth independently and adequately. In the light of these findings we recommend the development of educational workshops for dentists, parents and caregivers to improve their skills in maintaining the oral hygiene of children with ASD so that professional oral health care services are easily accessible to them.