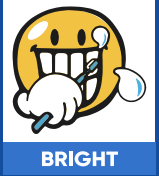


CAN A DENTAL HEALTH LESSON AND TEXT MESSAGES HELP TACKLE TOOTH DECAY?



4 out of every 10 pupils
have at least one decayed tooth



CONTEXT

Tooth decay is common among pupils in secondary schools. It can cause pupils to feel pain in their teeth, making eating and sleeping difficult and stopping them from attending school.

SOLUTION

In the BRIGHT project, we investigated whether a school lesson on dental health and text messages twice a day to encourage toothbrushing would help secondary pupils to prevent tooth decay.

In total, 4680 pupils aged 11 - 13 years from 42 schools in the UK took part in the study.

The participants had a dental assessment at the start of the project and another one after around three years. We analysed if pupils said they brushed their teeth more frequently, had less plaque and were less likely to have tooth decay as a result of the intervention.

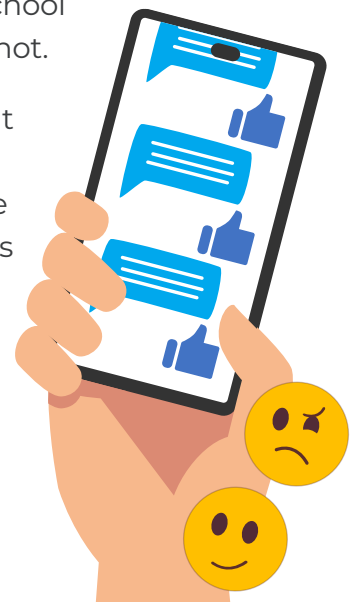
Lastly, we interviewed a sample of staff and pupils about what they thought of the lesson and the text messages.

FINDINGS

Intervention: Pupils who had the lesson and text messages reported they brushed their teeth more often for at least 6 months than those who did not receive the intervention, but there was no difference in this behaviour after three years.

We found no difference in tooth decay between the two groups at the end of the project. We did find the intervention was more successful in pupils who were eligible for Free School Meals than those who were not.

Interviews: The staff thought the lesson resources were good and pupils thought the lesson was acceptable. Pupils had mixed opinions about the text messages. Some pupils thought they were annoying or boring, and some liked receiving them.



CALL TO ACTION

This project showed promising results in improving pupils toothbrushing. We hope you will use the BRIGHT lesson resources in your school as part of the curriculum.

We are grateful to the pupils and schools who helped with this project. We will use the results to help find better ways to help pupils keep their teeth healthy, particularly those pupils who need our help the most.