

# Children and their families are not made aware of the impact of diabetes on oral health.

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## Innovative Quality Improvement Project to Improve Oral Health Knowledge and Practices of Children with Diabetes

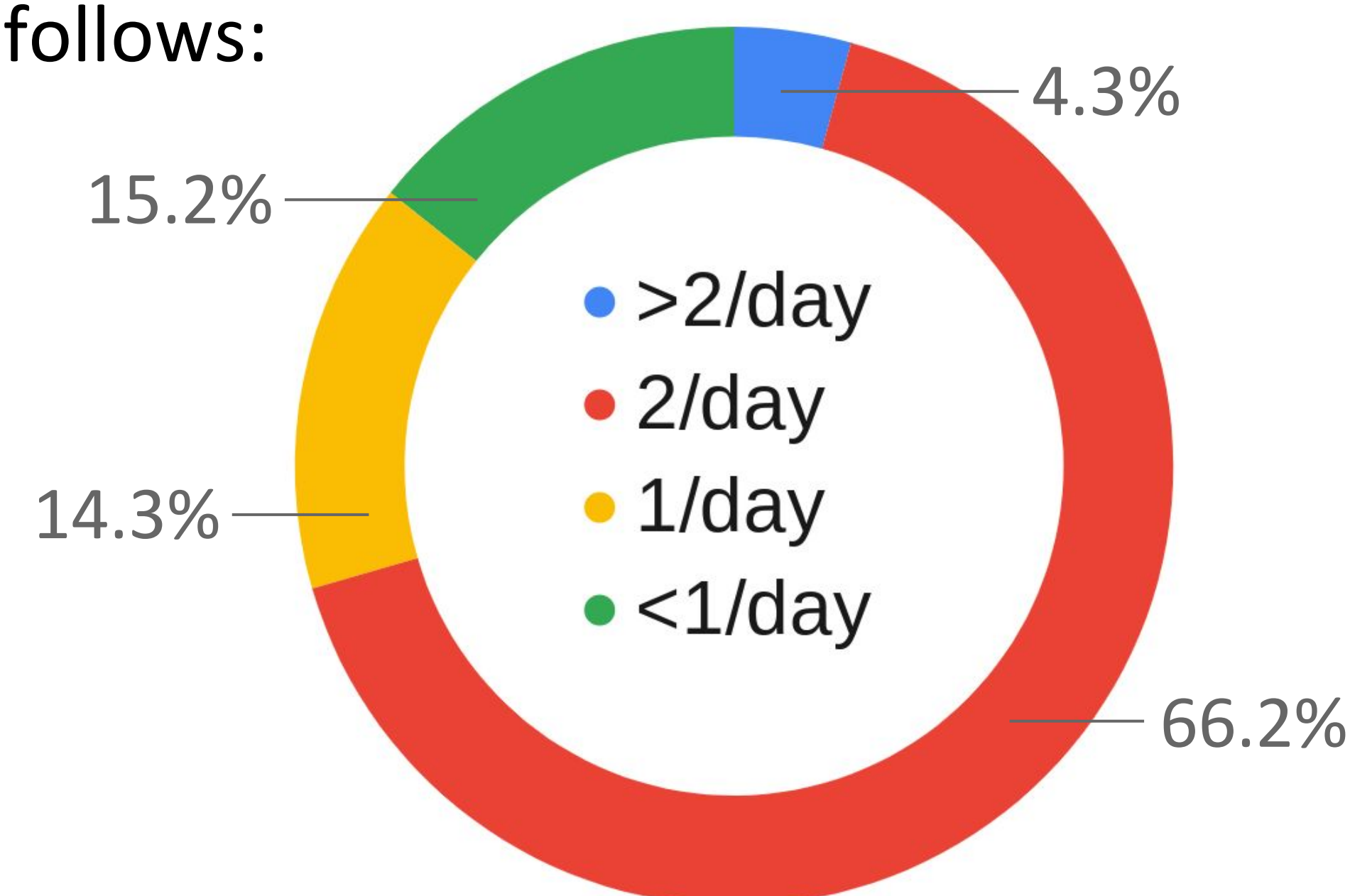
**Introduction:** Patients with diabetes are at a higher risk of developing a number of oral health (OH) conditions, most notably periodontal disease. This project set out to assess and increase patient knowledge about OH in a paediatric diabetic outpatient clinic.

**Methods:** Aligning with the **Making Every Contact Count** initiative, children being seen for diabetic outpatient review were given the opportunity to see a dentist in addition to their regular team.

Families who accepted this offer were given holistic oral health advice, tooth brushing instruction and education about how to tackle risks specific to them.

For each patient seen, the dentist completed an oral health recording tool. This provided the opportunity to study the patient's current practices and knowledge about diabetes and OH.

**Results:** Out of the children seen, 89% visited a dentist regularly. However, most of the families (61%) had no knowledge that diabetes had any impact on oral health and just 7% were aware of the specific risks to gingival health. 57% were unaware of risk reducing strategies and patients reported brushing their teeth as follows:



**Conclusions:** The majority of families from our initial cohort lacked awareness about the risks of diabetes to OH and about different preventative strategies, justifying the need for further education in this high risk patient group.

## How can you help?

We have demonstrated that giving this preventive advice is possible without the need for additional appointments. This is especially important given that the personal and economic burden of diabetic appointments is already so high.

For patients with diabetes:

1. Advise them that diabetes has an impact on their oral health
2. Encourage them to register with a dentist and to go regularly
3. Keep sugary food & drinks just to mealtimes where possible
4. If something sugary is needed, then rinse out after with water or fluoride mouthwash, or use sugar-free chewing gum (7yrs+)
5. Brush twice daily with a fluoride toothpaste. After brushing, spit out toothpaste but don't rinse.



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