

Hearing Loss and Dental Health

Hearing loss

Hearing problems are widespread in Nunavik with one quarter of adults having hearing loss in both ears. Men have three times more hearing loss than women (36% vs. 12%) and these problems are found to increase with age; more than half the adults over age 45 suffer from a hearing loss in both ears. Prevalence of hearing disability (as defined by World Health Organization) was 7.6% in Nunavik in 2004, which is one of the highest of the regions of the world surveyed to date.

Comparing men and women, hearing ability is similar in the youngest age group, but at age 30-44, men already show a greater deficiency compared to women. In the oldest age group (45 and over), three out of four men suffered bilateral hearing impairment compared to one out of four women. If we assume that hearing loss in women is primarily due to age and factors other than noise exposure, we can observe the deleterious effect of noise in the male population. Frequent hunters were found to have more damage to their hearing. A slightly worse hearing found in the left ear may be related to firearm exposure.

Hearing difficulties can contribute to communication isolation, unemployment, and social problems and impact not only the individual but also the community. With only 30% of the study group having completed secondary school, the possibility of negative effects of hearing loss on academic achievement should not be discounted. Secondary school graduates had significantly better hearing than those who did not graduate. In addition to reducing childhood chronic otitis media, more efforts at all levels must be directed towards the adult male population to reduce acquired hearing loss. Further analysis and research is needed to evaluate the multi-factorial relationship of hearing with pre-natal, post-natal and later influences.

Dental health

A fair proportion of Inuit state an inability to chew meat (9.1%) or an apple (9.9%). The masticatory disability is not related to the gender of the individual, but more to their age. In fact, the older Inuit are the ones suffering from this burden, given that almost one out of three adults aged 50 or older will not be able to chew either meat or an apple. The two questions used in this research were also present in the Quebec section of the Canadian Community Health Survey 2003. In both cases the research concluded that older people suffer more from masticatory disability than younger ones. The statistical test also reveals that a significantly larger proportion of the population of Nunavik suffers from masticatory disability when compared with the population of Quebec as a whole.

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