

Background

- Establishing a dental home by age one is essential for preventing early childhood caries, reducing the cost of future treatment, and creating life-long healthy oral health habits.
- Teledentistry eliminates barriers to care, including removing the need for travel and reducing costs, making it an appealing alternative for certain patient populations.
- Understanding parental preferences for visit modality is critical for designing unconventional approaches to care that parents are willing to both adopt and utilize.

AIM: This study examined whether parents of children aged three or younger preferred an in-person visit compared to a teledentistry visit.

Methods

- Cross-sectional telephone survey conducted from June 2025 – January 2026
- Surveyed parents of children aged three or younger scheduled for screening/recall in the UNMC/Children’s Nebraska Pediatric Dental Clinic (N=31)
- Questions included preferred visit modality and rationale, travel distance, telehealth familiarity, and parent/child sociodemographic information
- Results compiled and descriptive statistics collected

When offered both an in-person and telehealth option for a dental exam, more parents of underage three children chose the in-person visit option.

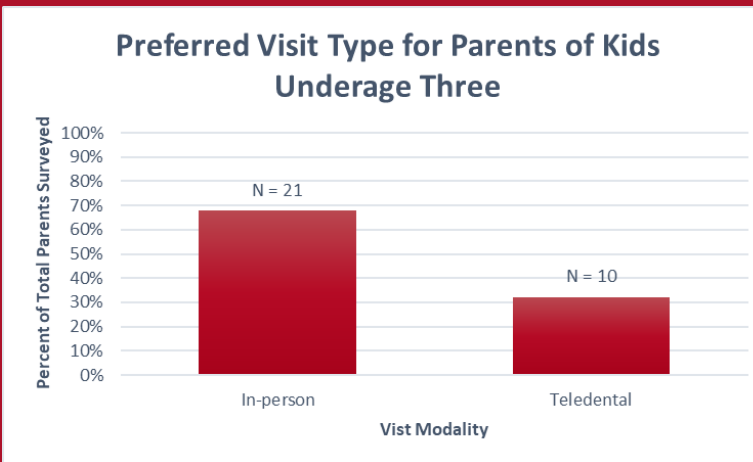


Figure 1. Number of parents choosing each type of visit

Results

Characteristic	Total N (%)	Characteristic	Total N (%)	Characteristic	Total N (%)
Total Participants (Verbal Consent): N=31		Child oral health status (parent report)		Parent relationship to child	
Child Upcoming Visit Modality		Excellent/Very good	19 (61.3)	Mother	26 (83.9)
In person	21 (67.7)	Good	11 (35.5)	Father	3 (9.7)
Video	10 (32.3)	Fair/Poor	1 (3.2)	Other	2 (6.5)
Child ever had a dental visit		Child has emotional/developmental/behavioral problem requiring treatment/counseling		Primary language spoken at home	
Yes	16 (51.6)	Yes	6 (19.4)	English	22 (71.0)
No	15 (48.4)	No	25 (80.6)	Spanish	6 (19.4)
Parent Telehealth experience		Child uses fluoride toothpaste		Other	3 (9.7)
Yes	15 (48.4)	Yes	24 (80.0)	Main reason NOT interested in a video visit (among those asked; n=21)	
No	16 (51.6)	No	6 (20.0)	Prefer in-person interaction	9 (42.9)
Travel time to clinic		Parent age (years)		Other	12 (57.1)
< 30 minutes	20 (66.7)	18-29	9 (30.0)	Main reason interested in a video visit (among those asked; n=10)	
≥ 30 minutes	10 (33.3)	30-39	17 (56.7)	Save travel time	4 (40.0)
Child dental insurance		40-49	3 (10.0)	Other	6 (60.0)
Medicaid/CHIP	18 (60.0)	≥50	1 (3.3)		
Private	10 (33.3)				
No dental insurance	2 (6.7)				

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of survey data

- Chose in-person: 68%
- Chose teledental: 32%
- Never had dental visit: 48%
- Parents new to Telehealth: 52%
- Travel < 30 min: 67%
- Excellent/Very Good OH: 61%
- Mother of child surveyed: 84%
- Non-English speaking: 29%

Conclusions

- More parents chose to keep their scheduled visits in-person rather than change to a telehealth visit.
- Parents with in-person visits preferred the face-to-face interaction with the dentist, while the most common reason to choose a telehealth visit was to save on travel time.
- Teledental visits, while not the preferred modality for all patients, can be a major asset to families facing different barriers to care.

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