

Prevention of social withdrawal through oral health approach in response to changes in lifestyle

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It is well known that many older adults are "socially withdrawn," meaning that they do not go out and stay at home, and thus require nursing care. Since 2016, applicants have been working on a joint medical-dental survey of older adults in the Tamba-Sasayama area and have reported on the relationship between social withdrawal and oral function in older adults. Our survey was temporarily suspended due to the Corona earthquake and resumed in September 2021. We speculated that this was due to lifestyle changes, but there is still insufficient evidence to confirm this. Therefore, the purpose of this project is to clarify the changes in lifestyle and health status of older adults before and after a novel coronavirus pandemic (before and after coronavirus infection), and to propose a dental approach after coronavirus infection based on these changes.

The subjects were 1098 older adults aged 65 years or older living in the Tamba-Sasayama area who underwent health examinations between June 2016 and December 2023. The lifestyle habits of older adults were assessed using a basic checklist, the JST version of the Activity Capacity Index, the Elderly Depression Rating Scale, and instrumental activities of daily living. Items related to oral function, body composition, motor function, and cognitive function were also assessed.

Study results showed that in activities of daily living, motor function, going out, depression, and social activities, older adults' lifestyle habits were significantly lower after the corona compared to before the corona. In oral hygiene, tongue pressure and occlusal force decreased significantly before and after the corona, but oral hygiene did not change. All motor functions decreased from before the corona. In the future, it will be necessary to take measures to improve motor function and social activity, which were decreased by the corona.