

WATCH YOUR MOUTH

Five Good Reasons to Watch Your Mouth in 2007

1. Too few citizens of our commonwealth know this important fact: Dental disease is the most common chronic childhood disease – 5 times more common than asthma. That's one reason you will likely hear a lot more about oral health this year than in the past. The good news is that unlike other social problems we face, there are community-based solutions that can put an end to this disease.
2. What happens if we do nothing? Because dental decay is caused by a bacterial infection, if left untreated it can put kids at increased risk for other health problems. In fact, scientists now believe that oral diseases are linked to chronic adult health problems such as heart and respiratory diseases. That's another reason for prevention. The fact is that if we worked together to make children's oral health a priority we could prevent up to 90% of dental decay in our kids.
3. Watching our children's mouths isn't just about their health, it's also about their educational progress. A recent survey found that nearly half of all 3rd graders in Massachusetts had a history of dental decay. Even worse, one quarter of these children were in class with untreated decay and infections that required immediate care. You can bet those children had trouble keeping up with their peers and paying attention in class.
4. It's time to make some progress on behalf of the children of Massachusetts. We require immunizations as a prerequisite to school attendance and we screen for vision and hearing problems. If we included oral health in these school-based screenings, we could ensure that this disease is not allowed to derail learning. We simply can't let a health problem that's so easy to prevent compromise our children's futures. It's just common sense.
5. We have the solutions, we just need the clout to make them available to all kids. When communities work together to make children's oral health a statewide priority, kids gain access to much needed services and prevention, including early dental screening, access to fluoride protection and dental sealants – those thin plastic coatings that are applied to children's molars. When we protect kids' oral health, we've made an important investment in the Commonwealth's future. The choice is up to us: we can either prevent this disease now, or pay later in expensive treatments and missed opportunities for our children.

Good public policies for children won't happen unless we speak up. That's why a diverse coalition of physicians, school nurses, PTA members, business leaders, service providers and other public health professionals have signed on to the Watch Your Mouth campaign here in Massachusetts. We need to increase the odds that all children get the early prevention and treatment they need to grow up healthy and disease free.

Five good reasons to make children's oral health the rule, not the exception. Join us in speaking up for children's oral health in Massachusetts. To learn what you can do, visit our website at:

www.WatchYourMouth.org
or call 1-866-WYMouth (1-866-996-6884)