

# WATCH YOUR MOUTH

## An Ounce of Prevention for the Hub of Invention

Massachusetts has been a hub of creativity and invention since the beginnings of our nation. We Bay Staters have enriched our country's history by creating the first public education system, the first public parks and beaches, the first subways and the first computer. The systems we created here in Massachusetts have helped our communities and our country thrive and grow. Today, we have the opportunity to lead the nation again by creating a system to prevent the most common, chronic disease of childhood: dental decay.

Dental decay is a destructive disease that is caused by a bacterial infection in the mouth. In Massachusetts, nearly half of all children have experienced this disease by the time they reach third grade. Left untreated, dental disease can impact a child's ability to eat, sleep and concentrate in school. For adults, the health consequences become more pronounced, with associations between dental diseases and heart disease, stroke, diabetes, and for women, the delivery of premature babies.

We know how to stop this disease and prevention is the key. When we provide preventive care to children in the places where they spend their days – in schools and in the community – we can reach thousands of children who may not have access to care otherwise. One of the most effective ways to protect children's oral health is the simple pairing of dental sealants with regular fluoride protection.

Dental sealants are thin, plastic coatings applied by a dental professional to the surfaces of back teeth. Sealants act as a shield, protecting teeth from decay. As calcium strengthens bones, fluoride strengthens teeth and makes them more resistant to disease. Fluoride protection can come in many forms – from professionally applied varnishes, foams, and gels; to toothpaste; to the water that we drink. Together, these two innovations can prevent the majority of dental disease before it starts. We have the solutions to this widespread disease, now it's time we created a sound system of oral health care for all of our towns and cities.

So, as the weather warms up and another great local invention – Red Sox Nation – comes alive again, let's prove that when we work together in Massachusetts we can overcome any obstacle. We have our best strategies set up for a win- together we can reverse the curse of childhood dental disease. This one certainly won't take 86 years to accomplish.

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**[www.WatchYourMouth.org](http://www.WatchYourMouth.org)**  
or call 1-866-WYMouth (1-866-996-6884)