



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**FOR MORE INFORMATION**

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**Preventing the Spread of the Flu—And Keeping Your Mouth Healthy, Too**

With flu season now in full swing, many Massachusetts residents are worried about coming down with either H1N1 or the regular seasonal flu. While receiving a flu vaccine may help you from falling victim to the flu virus, there are other precautions you can take to prevent the spread of infection—and help to keep your smile healthy.

Washing your hands frequently during any time of the year is important. But the Massachusetts Dental Society (MDS) recommends that you also practice good hand hygiene when brushing and flossing your teeth. Germs on your hands can easily be transmitted to your toothbrush and then to your mouth. It's important to make sure to wash your hands before and after brushing your teeth and flossing.

Most people don't realize that viruses and bacteria can live on your toothbrush. The MDS suggests that you replace your toothbrush every three months, but you should consider tossing your brush and getting a new one after you've been sick.

"Since toothbrushes are breeding grounds for bacteria, they should be kept isolated from other brushes, as well as surfaces that touch other brushes like toothbrush holders and bathroom cups," notes MDS President and Andover periodontist David S. Samuels, DMD.

It is also important to cover your coughs and sneezes with your sleeve instead of your hand, where germs can easily spread once you touch something. If you or a member of your family becomes ill, remember to limit the sharing of cups and utensils, wash your hands frequently, and sanitize bathrooms and kitchens thoroughly to limit the transmission of the virus.

By following some basic precautions, you and your family can stay physically healthy this season, while also maintaining good oral health.

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The Massachusetts Dental Society is a 5,000-member professional association and statewide constituent of the American Dental Association.