



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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FOR MORE INFORMATION

Bethann Dacey
(800) 342-8747

Take an Oral Exam *Before* Heading Back to School

For hundreds of thousands of children across Massachusetts, the end of summer marks the beginning of another school year. This often means a trip to the pediatrician or family doctor for a physical exam. Sadly, however, one part of the body that is still being overlooked is right under our noses...the mouth, which, upon closer examination, all too often reveals that the state of oral health among thousands of Massachusetts children is not making the grade.

Dental decay is the single most prevalent childhood disease, according to the Massachusetts Dental Society (MDS). Just like that physical exam before school starts, taking the preventative measure of a dental exam may help prevent your child from missing school later on in the year. A dentist will be able to examine your child's teeth and mouth for signs of decay or other issues and to make sure everything in the mouth is developing properly.

"Having a dental exam is an important step before your child goes back to school," says John Fisher, DDS, a general dentist from Salem and president of the MDS. "Every year, it is estimated that 51 million school hours are lost due to dental decay. Children can't concentrate and learn when they have a toothache and, too often, children suffer silently."

Parents can help their children maintain a healthy smile all year long by making sure they floss their teeth and brush well at least twice a day with fluoridated toothpaste. Avoid packing sticky school lunch or snack items such as candy, sugared gum, sticky granola bars, or even raisins, which can stick to the teeth and lead to decay. You may also want to consider sealants, which are thin plastic coatings brushed on to the tooth surfaces to prevent cavities. If your community's water supply is not fluoridated or if you have private well water, check with your dentist about the possibility of fluoride supplements for your child.

“Dental disease is totally preventable when you have the correct balance of fluoride rinses, fluoride in your toothpaste and community water supply, good oral hygiene habits, dental sealants when appropriate, and limiting sugary drinks and snacks,” says Dr. Fisher.

Parents should be encouraged to visit the dental office as part of their child’s back to school routine. In that way, when it comes time for the class photo to be taken later this fall, your child will really have something to smile about...and so will you.

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The Massachusetts Dental Society (MDS) is a 5,000-member professional association and statewide constituent of the American Dental Association. Established in 1864, the MDS is an organization dedicated to improving the oral health of the public in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, and also advancing the professional development of its membership through initiatives in education, advocacy, and promotion of the highest professional standards.