

Fluoride Mouthrinse

A safe and effective way to prevent tooth decay



What is the public health issue?

Tooth decay is a preventable chronic disease that affects children across all age groups.¹ In fact, it is the most common chronic disease of childhood.² Untreated tooth decay can cause pain and tooth loss, which can have negative effects on a child's self-esteem. Tooth decay can also affect eating, sleeping, learning, and proper nutrition.³ Access to prevention and treatment services decreases the risk for developing tooth decay. One way to deliver preventive oral health services to children that can help prevent tooth decay is a fluoride mouth rinse program in school.

What is fluoride?

Fluoride is the foundation for preventing tooth decay. Fluoride is a natural substance and is an abundant element in nature. Fluoride is "nature's way of preventing tooth decay" by hardening (remineralizing) the tooth's outer surface. Fluoride can have a systemic effect and it can have a topical effect (on the outer surface). Fluoride in a community water supply offers a systemic effect and is the most beneficial and economical way to strengthen both baby teeth and permanent teeth. Unfortunately, not all Massachusetts communities' public waters supplies have this benefit. Fluoride in toothpaste, given as part of dental treatment, and as part of the fluoride mouthrinse programs offers a topical effect.

What is the impact of fluoride mouthrinse?

Since 1978, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health has supported the Fluoride Mouthrinse Program, providing school-age children in grades 1-6 with an effective way to reduce decay at no cost to parents. This service is valuable to children because fluoride has been shown to be a safe, inexpensive and extremely effective in preventing tooth decay. When acid from plaque bacteria begin taking minerals out of the tooth enamel, fluoride can put minerals back in, and prevent tooth decay! Weekly mouthrinsing with fluoride provides topical fluoride; and the child does not swallow it. This type of topical fluoride can prevent tooth decay by 20-40%.

Is fluoride mouthrinse safe?

Yes. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has approved the 0.2% weekly sodium fluoride mouthrinse as a safe and effective means of preventing tooth decay. Under supervision, participating students will rinse their mouths in school with 10ml (2 teaspoons) of 0.2% neutral sodium fluoride solution for one minute each week. The solution is not swallowed. There are no known adverse effects associated with this procedure.⁵

What is Massachusetts doing?

In the 2008 school year, approximately 53,000 school children participated in this program, more than six times the participation rate in 1978, when the program began. A 2007 survey found over 40% of Massachusetts third-graders had experienced tooth decay, and only 46% of third-graders had at least one dental sealant (a material put into the tooth grooves to prevent cavities). Massachusetts is one of thirty-four states offering the Fluoride Mouthrinse Program in public and private schools. More than 260 public and private schools participate in the statewide program.

Lynn A. Bethel, RDH, MPH/Director, Office of Oral Health
250 Washington Street
Boston, MA 02108-4619

HEALTH SERVICES:

As you may be aware, the Amesbury DPW stopped adding fluoride to the town's water supply last April. This is the second time fluoridation of the town's water was ceased due to a quality issue with the product.

Each February, the American Dental Association (ADA) sponsors National Children's Dental Health Month to raise awareness about the importance of oral health.

We are currently assessing parental interest in offering a Fluoride Dental Rinse program. Fluoride rinse programs are not recommended for use by preschool-aged and kindergarten children because it is believed that they cannot adequately control their swallow reflex.

Please complete the following survey and return to your child's school nurse. If results are in favor of offering a dental rinse program, permission slips and further info will be forthcoming.

YES...I am interested in a Fluoride Rinse Program.

NO...I am not interested in a Fluoride Rinse Program.

Student's Name: _____

School _____

Grade _____

