



Massachusetts Department of Public Health

ORAL HEALTH BASICS

Office of Oral Health

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What's part of “Oral Health Basics”?



Why is oral health important?

What causes a cavity?

How to take care of your oral health?

When to see oral health providers?

How to get oral health care?

What to expect at your visit?

Disclaimer:

- These slides are not a replacement for dental care.
- Always consult with your own healthcare provider to review your personal circumstances prior to making any changes in your health routine(s).
- These slides aim to incorporate evidence-based guidelines, but they also include some clinical opinions.
- Medical and dental clinical guidance may change over time as more research is completed and new science develops.
- Any products, companies, trade names, trademarks or otherwise that are visible or referenced within these slides does not constitute or imply its endorsement or recommendation.

Why is Oral Health Important?



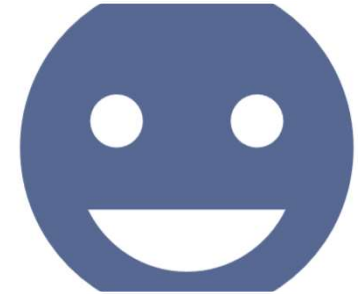
Health



Eat



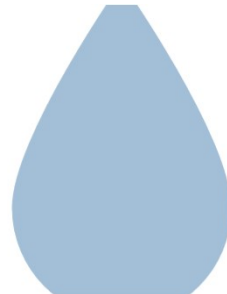
Talk



Smile



School / Work



Saliva



Prevent Disease

Why is oral health important?

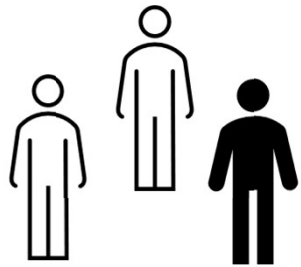
- Oral health is overall health.
 - It matters across the lifespan and for everyone.



- Oral health status is linked to chronic diseases and cancers.
 - Diabetes, heart disease, respiratory disease, obesity ...
 - Oral cancers and cancers spreading from elsewhere in the body



Why is oral health important?

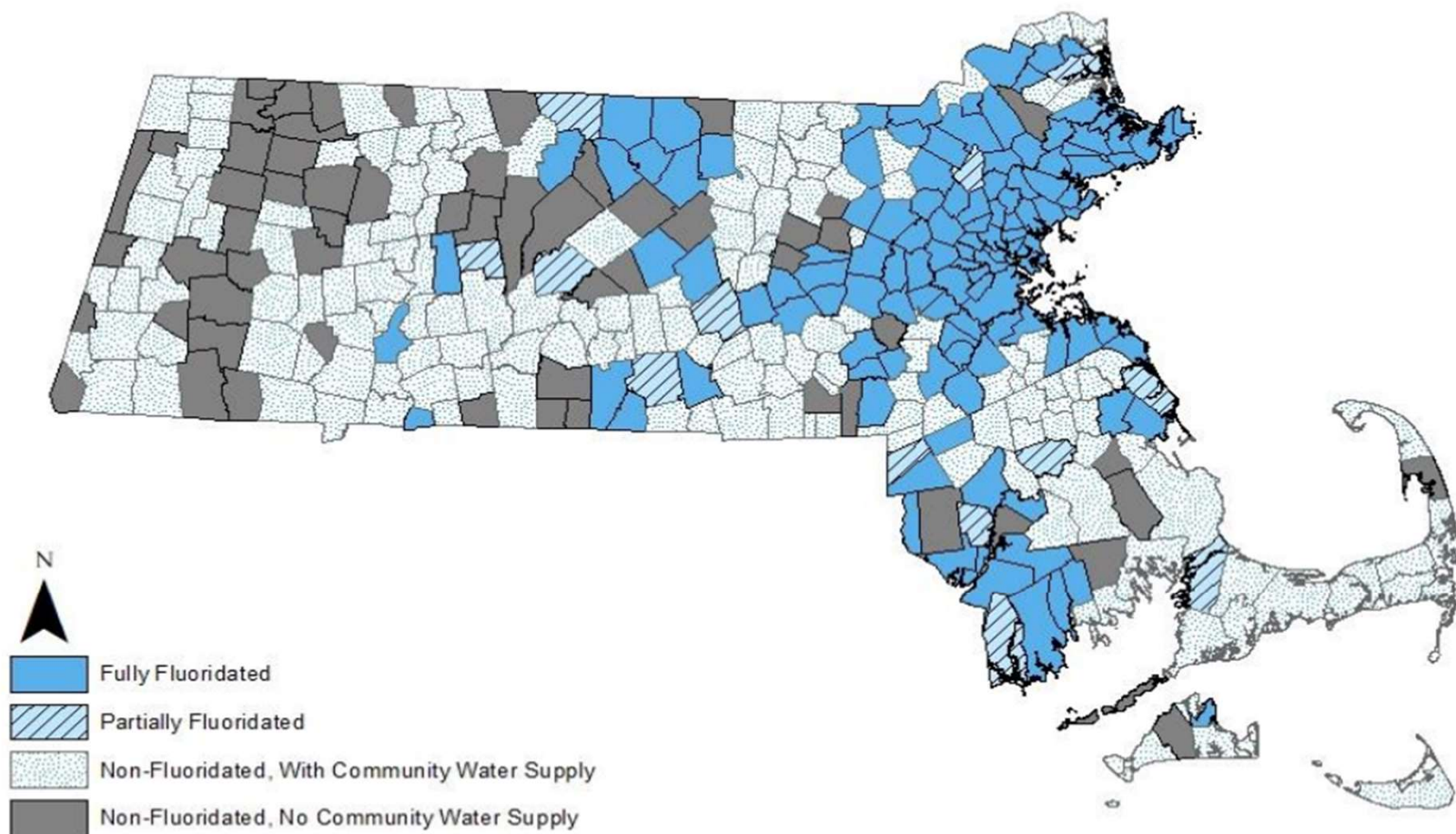


1 in 3 High School Students reported having a cavity in the past year.

- Dental cavities are the most common chronic condition in children.
- 25% of middle school students in MA reported having a cavity in the past year.
- Adults who are low-income, have less than a high school education, non-Hispanic Black, and current smokers are 2 times more likely to have untreated cavities than comparison groups.

Cavities are preventable.

2021 Community Water Fluoridation Status



Please note: Some communities in Massachusetts, and in other states, are being impacted by shortages in fluoride product supply, starting as early as late 2021, therefore the current status of some fluoridated communities may be different than what is listed due to a temporary suspension of fluoridation.

Massachusetts Department of Public Health
Office of Oral Health

Community Water Fluoridation:

Learn more about your water!

An official website of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts [Here's how you know](#)

Menu Select Language State Organizations Log In to...

Mass.gov Search Mass.gov

Board of Certification of Operators of Drinking Water Supply Facilities > Get a Drinking Water Supply Facility Operator's License

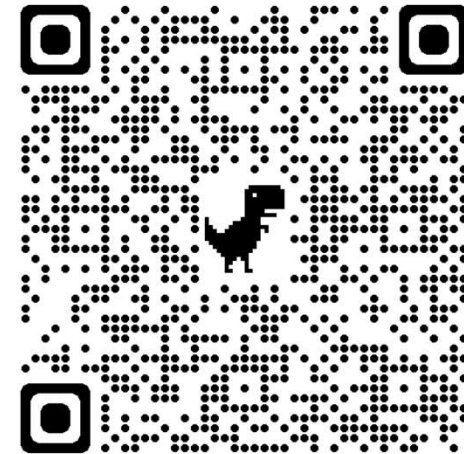
OFFERED BY Office of Oral Health Bureau of Community Health and Prevention Department of Public Health

Community Water Fluoridation Resources

Fluoride resources for Massachusetts Certified Water Operators, Local Boards of Health, health professionals, and the public

What you need to know

- Fluoride monitoring & reporting forms for Water Operators →
- Oral Health information for Local Boards of Health →
- Massachusetts Cities and Towns by Community Water Fluoridation Status →



2021 List of Massachusetts Cities/Towns by Community Water Fluoridation Status

Fully Fluoridated Cities & Towns					
Clinical Recommendations for Infancy, Childhood, and Adolescence for Fully Fluoridated Cities & Towns ¹ : (1) Confirm (or refer to) Dental Home, Perform Risk Assessment (2) Apply Topical Fluoride Varnish					
City/Town	Year Began	Population	City/Town	Year Began	Population
Acton	1970	23,634	Lawrence	1983	80,022
Acushnet	2007	10,589	Lexington*	1978	33,304
Amherst	1987	39,995	Lincoln	1971	6,868

2021 List of Massachusetts Cities/Towns by Community Water Fluoridation Status

Non-Fluoridated Cities & Towns					
Clinical Recommendations for Infancy, Childhood, and Adolescence for Non-Fluoridated Cities & Towns ² : (1) Confirm (or refer to) Dental Home, Perform Risk Assessment (2) Apply Topical Fluoride Varnish (3) Consider Prescribing Oral Fluoride Supplementation					
City/Town	Population	City/Town	Population	City/Town	Population
Abington	16,557	Clinton	13,940	Hawley^	421
Adams	8,084	Colrain	1,772	Heath^	671
Agawam	28,627	Conway^	1,854	Hinsdale	1,721

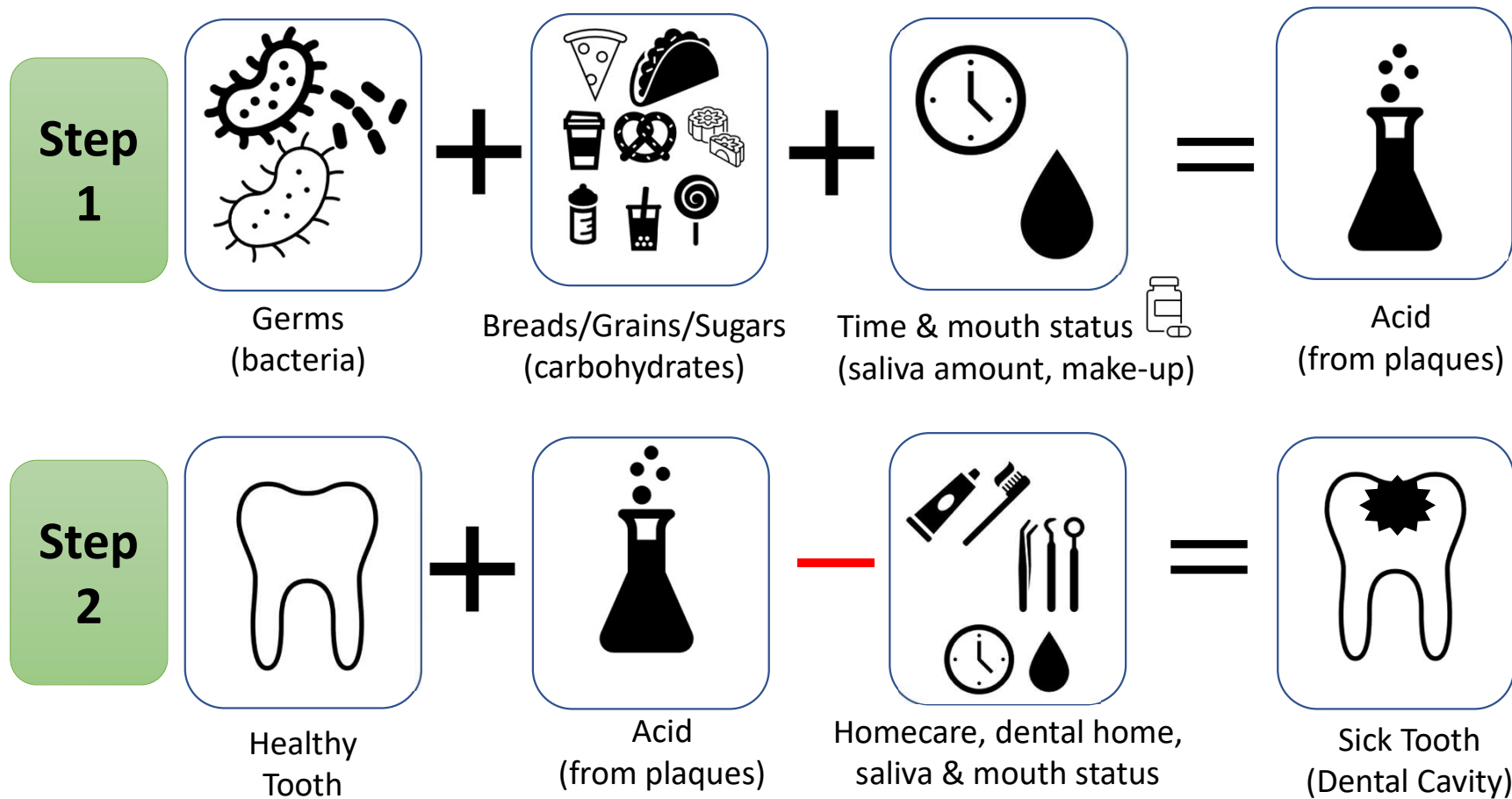
<https://www.mass.gov/community-water-fluoridation-resources>

What causes a cavity?



<https://youtu.be/zGoBFU1q4g0>

What causes a cavity?



How to take care of your oral health?



✓ Practice prevention:

- ✓ Get vaccinated & work to improve chronic health conditions where you are able



- ✓ Avoid/reduce harmful habits



✓ Pick healthy foods and drinks

- ✓ Pick water with fluoride



- ✓ Get quality sleep & exercise



- ✓ 2x per day, clean all teeth surfaces



- ✓ Community, mental health, reduce stress

How to take care of your oral health?



With the dental healthcare professional:

- ✓ Visit at least once per year or as directed by a dental healthcare professional (Have a “dental home” – a place you regularly go.)
- ✓ Focus on preventive care and ask about it:
 - ✓ “Check-ups” and “teeth cleanings”
 - ✓ Fluoride varnish (a fluoride mixture that can help prevent cavities)
 - ✓ Dental sealants (longer-lasting protective teeth coatings to help prevent cavities)
- ✓ Don’t wait for tooth pain to go

There's more to the story...

“The Social Determinants of Health”

- The environment and safety where you live.
- Housing status.
- Income.
- Education.
- Health care access and quality.
- Healthy food and water access.
- Community and support systems.
- And more...



Things we cannot change.



Certain health conditions. The need for some medications.

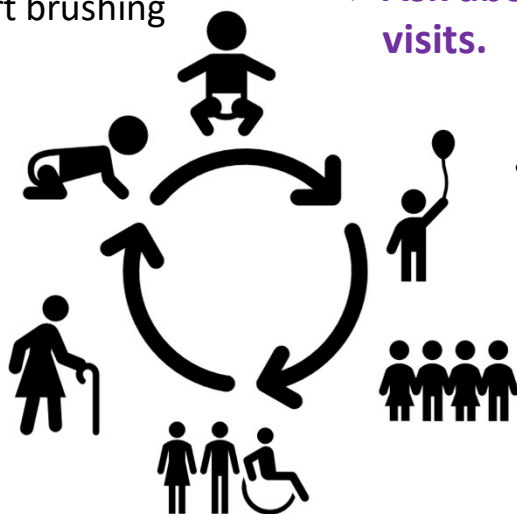


Disability. Age. Race. Sexual Orientation. And more...

Mouth care throughout the lifespan:

- Infancy – start twice a day routine with a clean wet cloth over your finger.
- Age of first tooth in mouth – start brushing twice a day.
- Any 2 teeth touching – start to floss between them.

- ❖ **Reminder – 1st dental visit by the 1st Birthday**
- ❖ **Ask about fluoride varnish at medical and dental visits.**



- Child able to spit out, start using a pea-sized amount of toothpaste containing fluoride.

- Childhood - parent/guardian continues to inspect/guide and re-brush and re-floss to ensure a good job.

- Adulthood – continue twice a day routine

- ❖ **Dental care is safe during pregnancy.**

- Disabilities- all ages - work with your dental healthcare professionals on modifications/accommodations that work for your specific needs.
- Caregivers – all ages - monitor homecare routine and actively re-brush and re-floss as needed and agreed.

Brushing Teeth

Adult Brushing Basics:



Brush for 2 minutes



Brush all the teeth, gumline, and the tongue



Use a soft brush



Use toothpaste with fluoride



Brush twice a day



<https://youtu.be/xm9c5HAUBpY>



TIPS:

- Don't share toothbrush with others.
- Get a new brush about every 3 months or after being sick.
- Frayed bristles likely mean there is too much pressure being used.
 - *Try using 2 fingers to hold the brush instead of a full-fisted grip.*

Toothpaste Guidance:

- ✓ Pick a toothpaste containing fluoride
 - Always look at the “active ingredient” section on the label:
 - Look for “fluoride ion” and/or “fluoride”

Active ingredient	Purpose
Sodium monofluorophosphate 0.76% (0.15% w/v fluoride ion)	Anticavity
Use helps protect against cavities	

Active ingredient	Purpose
Sodium Fluoride 0.24% w/w (0.15% w/v Fluoride Ion)	Anticavity toothpaste
Use Helps protect against cavities	

- ✓ Recommend looking for the “ADA Accepted”® seal of approval



Use only a smear
(grain of rice size),
Until able to spit



Use a pea-sized amount,
Once able to spit

Image credit:
<https://www.anzspd.org.au/post/toothpaste#.YzXi23bMJPY>

Brushing Teeth

Child Brushing:



<https://youtu.be/kuLxz5lrZ6Y>

Instructions for Caregivers & Accommodations to Consider :



SMILES UNITED LESSON 3: Oral Hygiene Instructions for Caregivers



<https://youtu.be/UQoMtRGjowc>

What about flossing?

- ✓ The goal of homecare is to clean ALL the teeth surfaces.
 - If any of your teeth touch each other, flossing may help to clean where the brush doesn't reach.
- ✓ Floss at least once a day between all the teeth that touch.

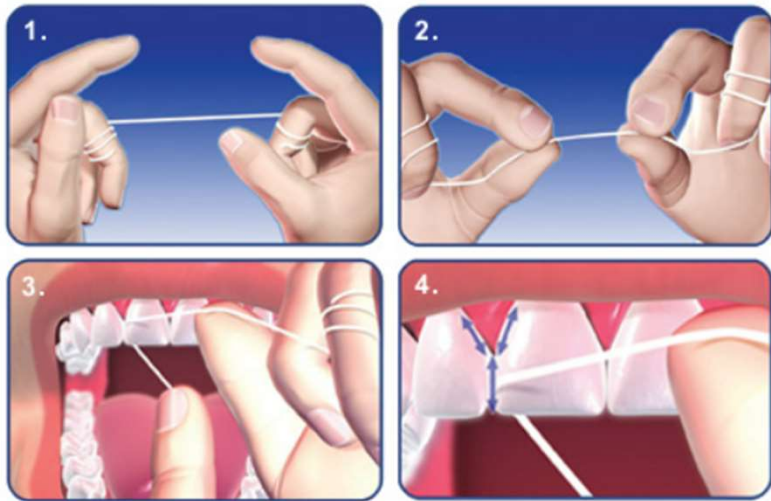


Image Credit: <https://www.madisonsmilecare.com/blog/post/facts-on-flossing.html>



<https://www.electriceeth.com/best-flosser-flossing-tools/>



<https://www.safcodental.com/catalog/preventives/interdental-brushes/gum-proxabrush-go-between-handles-and-refills?>

Other Tips:

Looking to do more?

Try not to rinse after brushing.

- ✓ Leave the toothpaste foam alone.
- ✓ If you must use a mouth rinse, consider an alcohol-free anticavity rinse.



Space brushing time about 1 hour from mealtimes.

- ✓ Either before or after breakfast.
- ✓ Best after your last meal and prior to sleeping.



Consult your dental healthcare provider for homecare advice around “braces”, removable teeth, mouthguards, or any other needs.



<https://nationaldentex.com/products/dentures-partial>



<https://nationaldentex.com/products/appliances>



Patient & Caregiver Working Together:

Patient:

- Help to prepare
- Comfortable location/position
- Fun feature by age/state
- A comfort item?
- A fidget item?
- Helps to set a goal and/or prize

Caregiver:

- Review preparations for care
- Patience
- Start early in life, set a routine
- Ensure patient comfort
 - Prevent injury
 - Take breaks as needed
- Ensure accommodations wherever possible
- Motivations - goal and/or prize

When to see oral health professionals?



- ✓ First visit when the first tooth comes
 - By the 1st birthday 🎂
- ✓ At least once per year for a check-up
 - Even if without any natural teeth left
- ✓ Find a place that you will regularly go for care “a dental home” to help prevent pain and problems before they start.

Help avoid the emergency room for dental needs:

Emergency Room:

- Go here only for:
 - serious mouth injuries or infections/swellings that make it hard to breathe or swallow
 - for major jaw problems (like fracture or dislocation)
 - if directed by your dental provider
 - if unsure what to do or unable able to get help

Dental Healthcare Provider:

- Go here for most everything else:
 - general tooth pain, a lost tooth, broken replacement teeth, discomfort from a cavity, wisdom tooth pain, a lost filling or crown, bleeding gums
 - plan to call and/or visit here first

For most dental pain or problems, the dental healthcare provider is the best place to go for help.

What to expect at your visit:

How to prepare: Dental Insurance

- ✓ How will you pay?
 - Employer-sponsored dental insurance plan
 - Medicaid/Medicare, Health Safety Net
 - No insurance and paying out of pocket
- ✓ MA Health Connector (<https://www.mahealthconnector.org/>)
 - Need more assistance?
 - Consider contacting your local community health center and meeting with an insurance navigator one on one (<https://www.massleague.org/findahealthcenter/index.php>)
 - City of Boston Residents – consider the mayor's health line 617.534.5050

What to expect at your visit:

How to prepare: Finding Places for Care

- ✓ If you have an insurance card, call the number listed or use the plan's website to find a provider
- ✓ Consider one of the state's schools of dental medicine or hygiene schools
- ✓ Private office setting:
 - Word of mouth, internet search, American Dental Association
<https://findadentist.ada.org/>
- ✓ Portable dental care offered at your child's school, community centers, or elsewhere
 - Public health dental hygienists, school-based health centers, other portable programs
- ✓ MassHealth (Medicaid) or Health Safety Net:
 - https://provider.masshealth-dental.net/MH_Find_a_Provider#/home
 - MassHealth Dental Program Customer Service: 1-800-207-5019, TTY: 1-800-466-7566

What to expect at your visit:

How to prepare: Accommodations

When making an appointment make the office aware of help needed or accommodations, or any other special requests you might have.

- ✓ Need a ride or help getting there? That may be covered by insurance.
- ✓ Spoken language translation needed?
- ✓ Building access concerns? Other enabling needs?

What to expect at your visit:

Not feeling well or other concerns?

- ✓ Call your dental care team as soon as possible to review your concerns. Care is usually rescheduled unless urgent.
- ✓ Telehealth/teledentistry may be another option.

Before the appointment:

- ✓ Aim not to bring any extra people that are not required.
- ✓ Review the location, parking, access to the building.
- ✓ Bring your insurance card, if you have one.

What to expect at your visit:

Expectations:

- ✓ Expect to be asked to follow special rules for safety.
- ✓ Have a list of your health conditions, medications, allergies, and questions ready.
- ✓ Ask questions when you are unsure of anything.
- ✓ Review costs of treatments planned.

What to expect at your visit:

Dental Fear:

- ✓ Dental fear is common.
 - For many patients it is the unknown, a feeling of loss of control, or a related experience with trauma. Review a plan with the provider.
- ✓ Providers can share a signal to stop that the patient can give anytime- such as a raised hand.
- ✓ Providers can also explain what they are doing as they work.
- ✓ Tips- headphones, a weighted blanket, a fidget item.

What to expect at your visit:

In the Dental Chair:

- ✓ Focus on preventive care and ask for it.
 - Teeth cleanings, protective sealants, fluoride varnish.
- ✓ Expect an exam first.
 - X-rays (radiographs) may be needed and other tests.
- ✓ The provider will be able to review what's going on, the options available to help, and the need for any medicines.
- ✓ The provider will also review the risks and benefits of the options available. There will likely be a list of things being recommended called a “treatment plan”. Ask for a copy of the plan, review it, and be sure you understand.

What to expect at your visit:

When you leave:

- ✓ Double check all questions are answered.
- ✓ Understand the instructions for after your care that day and anything you need to do before the next visit.
- ✓ Ask any unresolved payment questions.
- ✓ Understand your planned future treatments.

Office of Oral Health

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mass.gov/orgs/office-of-oral-health

For general inquiries, contact us at:

oral.health@mass.gov

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