

Why “Wait and See” Fails Patients: Dr. Charles Howenstine Makes the Case for Early Intervention in Dentistry

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Sterling Heights, Michigan Apr 11, 2026 ([IssueWire.com](https://www.IssueWire.com)) - In modern dentistry, one phrase continues to shape patient outcomes for better or worse: “wait and see.” While often intended to avoid unnecessary treatment, this approach can allow small, manageable issues to develop into complex and costly problems. Dr. Charles Howenstine, DDS, a dentist and practice owner based in Stevensville, Michigan, is challenging this long-standing mindset by advocating for early intervention and prevention as the foundation of effective dental care.

With a clinical philosophy centered on identifying and arresting dental disease in its earliest stages, Dr. Howenstine emphasizes that proactive care is about stopping problems before they escalate. His approach focuses on applying practical, evidence-based methods to arrest decay, arrest gum inflammation, and maintain oral health before invasive procedures become necessary.

“In dentistry, timing matters,” says Dr. Howenstine. “When we identify disease early, we have the opportunity to stop it. If we delay, we often lose that opportunity, and treatment becomes more complicated for the patient.”

At the core of Dr. Howenstine’s philosophy is the concept of “arrest.” In dental terms, an arrested condition means that a disease process such as tooth decay or gum inflammation, has been stopped and is no longer progressing. This principle guides every aspect of his practice, from diagnosis to treatment planning and patient communication.

Rather than relying on a passive “*wait and see*” approach, Dr. Howenstine encourages active monitoring and early intervention. For example, when early-stage tooth decay is detected, he may recommend non-invasive treatments designed to arrest the lesion before it requires a filling or more extensive restoration. Similarly, early signs of gum inflammation can often be managed with targeted preventive care, reducing the risk of periodontal disease.

“Small problems are easier to manage,” he explains. “When we act early, we can often avoid more invasive procedures. That’s better for patients in terms of comfort, time, and long-term outcomes.”

Dr. Howenstine’s approach is shaped by a unique professional background that blends business discipline with clinical expertise. Raised in Rice Lake, Wisconsin, he graduated from Rice Lake High School in 1999 before pursuing a degree in Finance at Marquette University, which he completed in 2003. He began his career at Capstone Investments, where he developed a strong foundation in analysis, documentation, and structured decision-making.

These skills now play a critical role in his dental practice. Dentistry, like finance, requires careful evaluation of information, attention to detail, and the ability to make informed decisions based on evidence. For Dr. Howenstine, this means thoroughly assessing each patient’s condition and implementing treatment plans designed to achieve the best possible outcome often by stopping disease before it advances.

After several years in finance, Dr. Howenstine made the decision to transition into healthcare, returning to school through the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee. He went on to earn his Doctor of Dental Surgery degree from the Marquette University School of Dentistry in 2011. Early in his clinical career, he practiced in Wisconsin with Midwest Dental in Kimberly, where he gained valuable experience in preventive care and treatment planning.

In 2012, Dr. Howenstine relocated to Stevensville, Michigan, where he purchased a dental practice and began overseeing both clinical care and operations. As a practice owner, he has implemented systems that reflect his commitment to consistency, accuracy, and follow-through. These include structured routines, detailed documentation, and ongoing monitoring designed to support early diagnosis and effective intervention.

“Consistency is key,” he says. “When you have systems in place, you’re better able to catch changes early. That’s how we keep conditions from progressing.”

Communication also plays a central role in Dr. Howenstine’s work. He believes that patients are more likely to take action when they understand their condition and the reasons behind a recommended treatment. Rather than using complex terminology, he focuses on clear, fact-based explanations that empower patients to make informed decisions about their care.

“When patients understand what’s happening and why it matters, they’re more engaged,” he explains. “That engagement is essential for prevention and early intervention to work.”

Dr. Howenstine notes that the “wait and see” approach often stems from a desire to avoid unnecessary procedures. However, he argues that in many cases, early intervention is actually the more conservative option. By addressing issues at their earliest stages, dentists can often use less invasive techniques, preserve more of the natural tooth structure, and reduce the need for extensive treatment later.

“For many patients, early care is the least invasive path,” he says. “It’s about doing the right thing at the right time.”

This philosophy extends beyond individual treatments to a broader view of oral health. Dr. Howenstine emphasizes the importance of regular check-ups, short follow-up visits, and ongoing monitoring as part of a comprehensive strategy to keep dental conditions arrested. By maintaining a proactive approach, patients can avoid the cycle of reactive care that often leads to more significant problems.

Outside the dental office, Dr. Howenstine’s commitment to discipline and preparation is evident in his personal pursuits. Over the years, he has participated in varsity hockey and soccer, trained for half marathons, crewed on a racing sailboat, and competed in long-distance cross-country ski races. These activities reflect the same values that guide his professional life: persistence, planning, and steady progress.

“Whether it’s training for a race or maintaining oral health, the principle is the same,” he says. “Small, consistent efforts lead to better outcomes over time.”

As dentistry continues to evolve, Dr. Howenstine believes that the future of patient care will increasingly focus on prevention and early intervention. Advances in diagnostic tools and treatment techniques are making it easier than ever to identify and arrest disease in its earliest stages. However, he emphasizes that technology alone is not enough what matters most is how it is applied.

“Technology is a tool,” he explains. “It’s how we use it that makes the difference. The goal should always be to improve patient outcomes, and early intervention is one of the most effective ways to do that.”

For patients, the message is clear: proactive care can make a significant difference in both the short and long term. By addressing issues early, maintaining regular dental visits, and following preventive recommendations, individuals can reduce the likelihood of more complex treatments and enjoy better overall oral health.

Dr. Howenstine’s work in Stevensville reflects a broader shift in dentistry that prioritizes prevention, patient education, and timely action. By moving away from a passive “wait and see” approach and embracing early intervention, he is helping patients achieve healthier outcomes and a more positive experience in the dental chair.

“Dentistry doesn’t have to be reactive,” he says. “When we focus on prevention and act early, we can change the trajectory of a patient’s oral health. That’s the goal.”

Through his commitment to clear communication, practical treatment planning, and early intervention, Dr. Charles Howenstine continues to demonstrate that in dentistry, the best results often come not from waiting but from acting at the right time.

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