



FLUORIDE



WHAT IS FLUORIDE?

Fluoride is a naturally-occurring mineral found in water sources across the globe. When swallowed or applied to the teeth, fluoride helps prevent cavities in children and adults by making the outer surface of teeth more resistant to the acid attacks that cause tooth decay.

According to the American Dental Association, tooth decay is effectively prevented by a combination of both **systemic fluoride** and **topical fluoride** applications.

Systemic Fluoride

As children, before teeth break through the gums, the fluoride taken in from foods, beverages, and supplements makes tooth enamel (the hard surface of the tooth) stronger. In addition, the fluoride you take in from foods and beverages continues to provide a topical benefit because it becomes part of your saliva, constantly bathing the teeth with tiny amounts of fluoride that help rebuild weakened tooth enamel.

- **Public drinking water**

Cities and towns that have community fluoridated water adjust the level of existing, naturally occurring fluoride in their public drinking water to an optimal level for oral health.

- **Fluoride supplements**

Fluoride tablets or drops are available by prescription for those who do not have fluoridated drinking water.

Topical Fluoride

When applied to the surface of teeth, the fluoride in toothpaste and other dental products helps rebuild weakened tooth enamel and reverses early signs of tooth decay.

- **Fluoridated toothpastes & mouthwashes**

- **Prescription-strength products**

May be prescribed for people who are at a higher risk of decay, like those with a previous history of tooth decay or certain medical conditions, such as dry mouth.

- **Fluoride varnish**

A gel that is “painted” directly onto the tooth surface. Fluoride varnish may be applied at a dental or medical visit.

Is fluoride safe?

YES

Studies conducted for more than 70 years have consistently shown that fluoride is safe and very effective at preventing tooth decay in both adults and children. The American Dental Association, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry, among dozens of other groups, **all support the benefits of fluoride in reducing tooth decay.**



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How else can cavities be avoided?



Brush

for **2**
MINUTES



TIMES PER DAY



with a
**FLUORIDATED
TOOTHPASTE**



LIMIT sugary snacks and drinks, such as candy and soda



CHOOSE WATER
(especially fluoridated water)
or milk instead of sugary drinks



FLOSS
daily



Visit your
DENTIST
regularly



How much toothpaste should you put on your child's toothbrush?

Parents and caregivers should begin to brush a child's teeth using fluoridated toothpaste as soon as the first tooth erupts.

- For children younger than 3 years old, use a smear of fluoride toothpaste the size of a grain of rice.
- For children 3 years and older, use a pea size amount of fluoride toothpaste.



What should you do for your child's oral health if you live in a non-fluoridated community?

Children in non-fluoridated areas should have an oral health risk assessment to determine the need for topical treatments and/or systemic fluoride supplements. Supplements may be offered to high risk children who do not have access to systemic fluoride through age 16. Fluoride varnish should be offered to moderate and high risk children by a dentist or physician at least twice a year.