FLUORIDE FOR CHILDREN FAQ

Fluoride from drinking water and other sources like fluoride varnish, toothpaste and mouth rinse can help prevent tooth decay (dental caries for cavities) and make your child's teeth stronger. Here are some common questions parents ask about how fluoride helps protect children's oral health.



Q: Why do children need fluoride?
A: Fluoride is a natural mineral that can slow or stop cavities from forming. Bacteria in the mouth combine with sugars and make acid that can harm the outer layer of the tooth (enamel). Fluoride protects teeth from damage and helps rebuild the enamel. In other states, many communities add fluoride to their tap water to help fight cavities. Children should drink plenty of water and brush with toothpaste that has fluoride in it.

Q: Is fluoridated water and products safe for my children?
A: Yes. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), the American Dental Association (ADA), and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) agree that fluoridated products and water fluoridation is safe and works to prevent tooth decay.

Q: Should my child get fluoride varnish?
A: Yes. Fluoride varnish can help prevent or slow down tooth decay. Your pediatrician or dental care provider will apply the varnish starting when your baby is 6 months old at their well-child visits. It is painted on the top and sides of each tooth. Then, it is brushed off after 4 to 12 hours. The AAP, ADA, and CDC recommend that children have fluoride varnish applied 2 to 4 times per year in addition to using fluoride products at home depending on their cavity risk assessment. This assessment is provided through an oral health survey and screening, at their routine well-child visit.

Q: When should my child start using fluoride toothpaste?
A: The AAP recommends using a "smear" of fluoride toothpaste twice a day when the first tooth appears and until age 3. Once your child has turned 3, a pea-sized amount of fluoride toothpaste can be used.



Q: What should I know about fluoride if I am breastfeeding or using infant formula?
A: When they are younger than 6 months old, breastfed babies and babies fed infant formula do not need fluoride supplements or formula mixed with water that is fluoridated.

Q: Is our community water fluoridated? Is it safe?
A: According to the CDC, the most recent fluoridation status report for Idaho notes that no municipal water systems in Boundary, Bonner, or Kootenai counties add fluoride to their water systems to reach optimal levels of fluoridation. In fact, the only water system that adds fluoride to reach optimal levels is that of the Mountain Home Air Force Base.

A: Community water fluoridation is SAFE! Under the Safe Drinking Water Act. The fluoridation of drinking water is recommended by the ADA, the AAP, and the U.S. Public Health Service and the World Health Organization. In fact, the CDC proclaimed water fluoridation to be one of the top ten greatest public health achievements of the past century because of its contribution in the decline in tooth decay. For more information about your local water system, your city, your county, or for other areas in Idaho or across the nation, visit My Water's Fluoride, a CDC-managed site, at
https://nccd.cdc.gov/doh_mwf/default/default.aspx
Or, contact: (208)-334-6584 Email: rrpsection@idhw.idaho.gov

Q: What is dental fluorosis?
A: According to the CDC, Dental fluorosis is caused by taking in too much fluoride over a long period when the teeth are forming under the gums. Only children aged 8 years and younger are at risk because this is when permanent teeth are developing; children older than 8 years, adolescents, and adults cannot develop dental fluorosis. Fluorosis usually appears as very faint white streaks on the teeth. Often it is only noticeable by a dental expert during an exam. Mild fluorosis is not painful and does not affect the function or health of the teeth.

Q: Does my child need dietary fluoride supplements?
A: Use dietary fluoride supplements only as prescribed by a physician or a dentist. Fluoride supplements are recommended for children between 6 months and 16 years old living in non-fluoridated areas and at high risk of developing tooth decay. The prescription dosage is safe and strictly follows the dietary fluoride supplement schedule based on age, which is approved by the AAP, ADA, and CDC.

More Information can be found online:
- Good Oral Health Starts Early, www.healthychildren.org/English/news/Pages/Fluoride.aspx
- Fluoride a Powerful Tooth to Prevent Tooth Decay, www.healthychildren.org/English/news/Pages/Fluoride.aspx
- State Fluoride Reports, https://nccd.cdc.gov/DOH_MWF/Default/Default.aspx

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By Kelin Fuller, RDH, for Kaniksu Community Health February 2, 2023