

Smilematters

PATIENT FACT SHEET

The Benefits of Fluoride — Help Your Smile Be Its Best!

Fluoride is an important tool in your quest for good dental health. It helps to strengthen and even rebuild your tooth's enamel. You may receive fluoride from several sources — your toothpaste, mouth rinses, fluoride treatments from your dentist, and even your drinking water.

Topical Fluoride

When applied directly to the tooth's surface, fluoride can help make your teeth more resistant to the acid that attacks teeth and causes cavities. Make sure the toothpaste and other dental products you use contain fluoride. If you have certain risk factors, such as well water, a family history of tooth decay, or health conditions that may weaken your enamel, your dentist may apply a fluoride varnish or gel during your regular cleaning, or a gel, rinse or paste to apply at home.

Community Water Fluoridation: Safe and Effective!

If you receive your water from a community water supply, your water operator may be adjusting the fluoride levels in your drinking water for optimal dental health. Community water fluoridation is proven to be effective in reducing dental decay by at least 25 percent in children and adults. This process is regulated by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and fluoride levels are monitored closely by the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) as well.

Depending on the level of naturally occurring fluoride in your area, your water operator may reduce the level of fluoride or add fluoride to the water supply so that it falls within the levels recommended by the Department of Health and Human Services. These recommended levels are reviewed periodically to ensure the greatest public benefit and the least amount of risk. This process is similar to fortifying milk

with Vitamin D to ensure skeletal health.

Community water fluoridation has been scientifically proven safe and effective through reliable research over its nearly 70-year history.

The only scientifically proven risk associated with fluoride is called fluorosis. This condition may cause white spots on the tooth surface. This may happen in very young children who may get too much fluoride through drinking too much formula prepared with fluoridated water. Prepare formula with non-fluoridated water if your infant is consuming a diet of formula alone.

Information about Fluoride Safety

With the increase of information sharing online, it's sometimes hard to figure out which websites are reliable. Here are some sources where you can find reliable, scientifically proven data on the safety and effectiveness of fluoride:

CDC Fluoridation Frequently Asked Questions <http://www.cdc.gov/fluoridation/faqs/>

American Dental Association
<http://www.mouthhealthy.org/en/az-topics/f/Fluoridation>

PEW Charitable Trusts
www.pewtrusts.org (search fluoride)

American Academy of Pediatrics <http://www.healthychildren.org/English/news/Pages/AAP-Recommends-Fluoride-to-Prevent-Dental-Caries.aspx>