

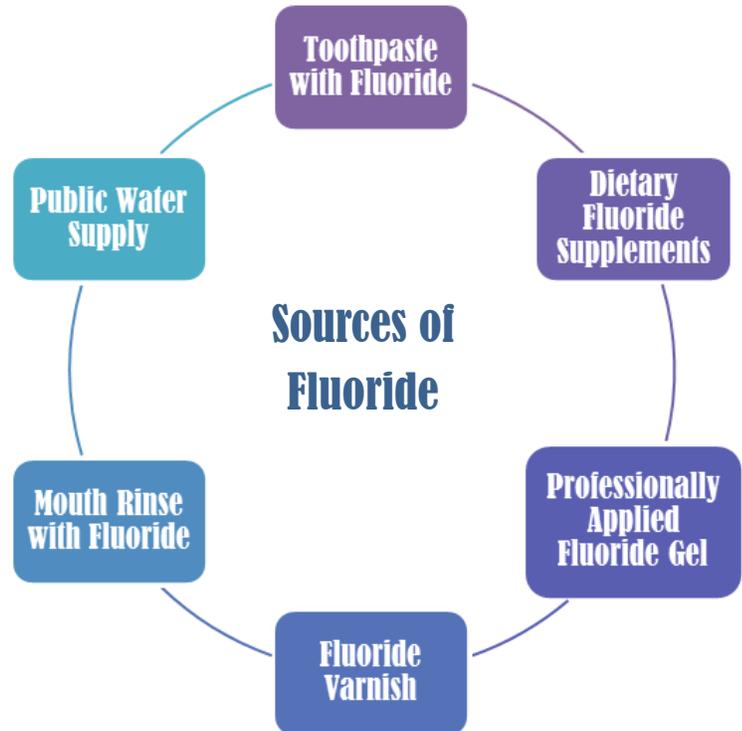
# The Facts about Fluoride

**Fluoride is a naturally occurring mineral that is present in water at varying levels.**

**Fluoride can be found in rocks, soil, and in both fresh and ocean water.**

## Fluoride is Important

- ◆ Helps prevent tooth decay from forming on teeth.
- ◆ Can reverse some signs of early tooth decay.
- ◆ Regular use helps make teeth stronger and more resistant to tooth decay.
- ◆ Kills germs that cause tooth decay.
- ◆ Low-cost and safe method for preventing decay.



### Toothpaste



Brush with toothpaste containing fluoride twice daily to prevent tooth decay.

### Dietary Fluoride Supplements



Fluoride tablets, drops or lozenges are available from your dentist or doctor with a prescription for children ages 6 months to 16 who live in areas with little or no fluoride in the water supply. Find out if your water supply contains adequate levels of fluoride to determine eligibility.

### Professionally Applied Fluoride Gel



Applied by dentists or dental hygienists in the office using a mouth tray, typically twice a year.

### Fluoride Varnish



Applied using a small brush on the teeth several times a year by dentists, dental hygienists or participating medical providers.

### Mouth Rinses



Some mouth rinses contain added fluoride. Check the label, and ask your dentist if mouth rinse with fluoride is right for you.

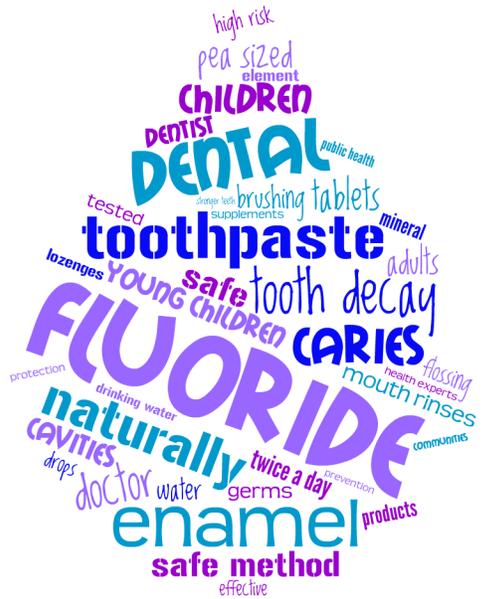
### Public Water Supply



Health experts endorse water fluoridation as the single, most effective public health measure to improve oral health.

# Is Fluoride Safe?

- ◆ More than 65 years of study and experience have shown the safety and benefits of water fluoridation.
- ◆ The addition of fluoride to drinking water can be compared to the addition of Vitamin D to milk.
- ◆ Both fluoride and Vitamin D occur naturally and provide significant health benefits when present at a sufficient level in a person's diet. For example, Vitamin D helps strengthen bones and can prevent bone disease. Fluoride strengthens tooth enamel and can help prevent cavities.
- ◆ Many public water systems in Maryland supplement the natural fluoride found in water to a level that provides optimal protection from tooth decay.



## Toothpaste Guide for Children

- ◆ Children at high risk for tooth decay should use toothpaste that has fluoride as early as possible.
- ◆ Children should be supervised and assisted with brushing until old enough to brush on their own.
- ◆ Never allow your child to share toothbrushes, it spreads germs.

## Checklist



- ◆ Find out if the water in your public water system or private well has fluoride. Contact your local health department and/or get your water tested to determine the level of fluoride. Visit <http://phpa.dhmh.maryland.gov/oralhealth/Documents/FluorideAndWaterTestingLabs.pdf> for water testing site information.
- ◆ Ask your child's dentist or pediatrician if fluoride supplements are right for your child.



### How Much Toothpaste with Fluoride?



**Under Age 3:** Slight smear about the size of a grain of rice



**Ages 3 - 6:** Pea-sized amount

(Toothbrush images courtesy of Dr. Norman Tinanoff, University of Maryland)

**Spit, do not rinse after brushing.**

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