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.

Sources of Fluoride

- Toothpaste with Fluoride
- Public Water Supply
- Dietary Fluoride Supplements
- Professionally Applied Fluoride Gel
- Fluoride Varnish
- Mouth Rinse with Fluoride

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.
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.

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