

YOUR Oral Health & Fluoride

The amount of fluoride found in toothpaste is usually enough to fight decay. Your dentist knows if you're getting enough, or too much.



Fluoride is a compound that occurs naturally in nature. When applied directly to

teeth or ingested, fluoride can have beneficial effects on the mouth by helping to prevent tooth decay, strengthening tooth enamel, and reducing the harmful effects of plaque.

Fluoride's maximum benefits can be realized during any stage of tooth development, particularly when applied to the tooth surface.

Fluoride can be ingested through fluoridated water, certain foods, and dietary fluoride supplements. It can be applied topically through toothpastes, mouth rinses and professionally by a dentist. Most toothpastes contain fluoride. The amount of fluoride in toothpaste is usually enough to reduce decay.



Municipal Impact on Fluoride

How and where you get your drinking water can affect the amount of fluoride that touches your teeth.

In the 1940s, scientists found a correlation between the level of naturally occurring fluoride in public drinking water and the amount of tooth decay experienced by local residents. Soon after, communities began adjusting the fluoride that occurs in water to optimal levels to prevent tooth decay in their regions.

Not all public water companies fluoridate their water, however, and well and spring waters carry

varying levels of fluoride by region.

Your dentist can easily determine if you're getting the appropriate amount of fluoride just by examining your teeth. If you need more, he or she may suggest a different toothpaste, more brushing, a fluoride mouthwash, or fluoride tablets.

There can be too much of a good thing. While a lack of fluoride can lead to tooth decay, getting too much can change how your teeth look. This process, called fluorosis, can occur when higher than optimal amounts of fluoride are ingested or applied topically in early childhood, as tooth enamel is forming.

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Mild cases of fluorosis present with a few white spots on teeth. More severe cases turn teeth a brownish color and weaken the enamel. The risk of fluorosis can be reduced by monitoring children's use of fluoride products and by maintaining regular appointments with your dentist. 🦷

FYI: More information can be found at the TRICARE Dental Program's (TDP) Dental Health Center (uccitdp.com); the Academy of General Dentistry (agd.org); and the American Dental Association (ada.org).

Did you know?

- **Fluoride can stop or even reverse the tooth decay process.** It benefits the tooth by preventing the loss of (and enhancing the reattachment of) important minerals from the tooth enamel.
- **Community water fluoridation** is an effective, safe, and inexpensive way to prevent tooth decay. Fluoridation benefits Americans of all ages.
- **Children and adults who are at low risk of dental decay can stay cavity-free through frequent exposure to small amounts of fluoride.** This is best gained by drinking fluoridated water and using a fluoride toothpaste twice daily. Your dentist will know what you need, or if you're all set.



Source: American Dental Hygienists' Association (adha.org)

Fact sheets in United Concordia's oral health series:



• Fluoride & Your Oral Health



• Oral Health: Infant to Teen



• Oral Health & Your Overall Wellness



• Oral Health for Kids with Special Needs



• Preventive Oral Care for Everyone



• Your Oral Health & Diabetes



• Your Oral Health & Heart Disease



• Your Oral Health & Lupus



• Your Oral Health & Oral Cancer



• Your Oral Health & Organ Transplants



• Your Oral Health & Rheumatoid Arthritis



• Your Oral Health & Pregnancy

Download fact sheets from the TRICARE Dental Program (TDP) Dental Health Center: uccitdp.com