



1. What is fluoride?

- Fluoride is a naturally occurring chemical that is effective in preventing tooth decay.
- In recent years, fluoride has been responsible for a dramatic decrease in dental **caries**, despite the increase in the consumption of sugar.

2. How can fluoride help my child's teeth?

- Fluoride strengthens the tooth **enamel**, making it more resistant to decay.
- Fluoride helps to decrease the formation of acids caused by the interaction of **plaque** and sugar in the mouth.
- It can help repair the early stages of decay when it has affected the enamel only. This is done by a process called **remineralisation**.

3. How is fluoride actually used?

- Fluoride can be taken by mouth, or can be applied directly to the teeth.

4. Can fluoride be put into the local or national water supply?

- It can. This is the cheapest and most effective way of bringing fluoride to the greatest number of people.
- The ideal concentration in drinking water is one part of fluoride to a million parts of water.

5. Can I add fluoride to my child's diet?

- Do not do this without first consulting your dentist or doctor and obtaining explicit instructions.
- Giving fluoride drops or tablets to your child should only be considered if your water supply has not been fluoridated, and if the natural fluoride concentration in the water supply is less than 0.3 parts of fluoride to a million parts of water.
- Your local water authority can advise you about the concentration of fluoride in your water supply.
- The recommended daily doses of fluoride supplements (tablets or drops) are:
 - 6 months to 3 years: 0.25 milligrams
 - 3 years to 6 years : 0.50 milligrams
 - above 6 years : 1.0 milligrams

6. Is fluoride in toothpaste a good idea?

- Fluoride in toothpaste has been a most important factor in the reduction of dental **caries**. It is recommended by the dental profession.
- Fluoride toothpastes should be rinsed out of the mouth and should not be swallowed.
 - Children should not use normal strength fluoride toothpaste until they can rinse out the toothpaste.

- Special low-dose fluoride toothpastes have been developed for children under the age of seven. For young children, a pea-sized "blob" of toothpaste is enough.

7. Are fluoride mouth rinses available?

- They are, but they are not recommended for children under the age of seven, because they must not be swallowed.
- Daily rinses are available with a .05% concentration of fluoride. These are more effective than the weekly rinses containing a 0.2% concentration.
 - Daily rinses are especially useful during orthodontic treatment, when cleaning around brackets and wires can be difficult.
 - They are also advisable for people who have a very high rate of tooth decay.
 - Fluoride rinses can actually reduce enamel softening, which is an early sign of decay. As with toothpaste, this enamel hardening process is called **remineralisation**.

8. Can fluoride be "painted" directly onto the teeth?

- There are fluoride varnishes and gels that can be applied directly onto the teeth by your dentist.
The varnishes are particularly effective and easy to apply. They dry quickly and eating can start soon afterwards.

9. Is fluoride at all dangerous?

- In excessive doses, fluoride, like most other substances, is toxic.
 - It is important not to exceed the recommended dose.
 - This is why fluoride toothpaste and mouthwashes should be rinsed out of the mouth, and not swallowed.
 - In the correct concentration, fluoride is safe and effective.

10. What is fluoridosis (fluorosis)?

- This is a brown and white mottling of the teeth, caused by an excess of fluoride during the development of the teeth.
This condition is seen in areas where there is too much fluoride in the natural drinking water.



Fluorosis