

COMMON QUESTIONS ABOUT FLUORIDE:

A Resource for Parents and Caregivers

1. Why do children need fluoride?

Fluoride is an important mineral for all children. Our mouths contain bacteria that combine with sugars in the foods we eat and the beverages we drink. The acid that is produced harms tooth enamel and damages teeth. Fluoride protects teeth by making them more resistant to acid and can even help reverse early signs of decay.

2. Is fluoridated water safe for me and my children to drink?

Yes. Decades of research and practical experience have confirmed the safety of fluoride. Based on what has been learned from both science and our years of experience, the world's leading health, dental, and medical organizations recognize water fluoridation as an effective way to reduce tooth decay for everyone – children and adults alike.

3. We brush our teeth with fluoride toothpaste every day. Do we still need fluoridated water?

Yes. For most people, brushing with fluoridated toothpaste is not enough. Drinking fluoridated water throughout the day bathes our teeth in low levels of fluoride to help them stay strong. That, combined with the more concentrated fluoride in dental products, prevents more tooth decay than toothpaste alone. That is why it is so important to make sure your children are drinking fluoridated water and brushing properly with fluoride toothpaste at least twice a day.

4. Are there health risks associated with these forms of fluoride?

No. There is no credible scientific evidence that fluoridated water or dental products contribute to or cause illness or disease. The only proven risk associated with excess fluoride is a cosmetic condition known as dental fluorosis.

5. What exactly is dental fluorosis? Should I be concerned about fluorosis from drinking fluoridated water?

Dental fluorosis is a change in the appearance of the teeth, usually in the form of very faint white markings. It is usually detectable only by a dental expert during an exam. Most fluorosis does not affect the function or health of the teeth. In fact, teeth with mild fluorosis are more resistant to cavities.

Most fluorosis is the result of consuming too much fluoride while teeth are forming, before the age of 8. To reduce this possibility, supervise brushing so that children do not use too much toothpaste or mouth rinse and learn to spit, not swallow.



The American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Dental Association, and the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry all support the use of fluoride to protect children's teeth.



American Academy
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6. Is it safe to mix infant formula with fluoridated water?

According to the American Dental Association, it is safe to mix infant formula with fluoridated water.

7. Are the fluoride additives used to fluoridate drinking water safe?

Yes. The fluoride that is added to public water supplies conforms to stringent safety standards and results in water that complies with the Safe Drinking Water Act. The quality and safety of fluoride additives are ensured by Standard 60, a program that was commissioned by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). This program is monitored by an independent committee of experts, including the Association of State Health Officials and other key organizations.

8. How much fluoride should my child have to protect his/her teeth?

Children who consume a nutritious diet, drink fluoridated water, and use fluoridated toothpaste properly will get all the fluoride they need for healthy teeth. It is not necessary to monitor water or food consumption since your child ingests low levels of fluoride from these sources. Parents will want to assure that children are not swallowing mouth rinse or toothpaste, which contain more concentrated amounts of this important mineral. Your health or dental provider can help you determine if your child is getting an adequate amount of fluoride to protect his/her teeth.

Sources of Fluoride



Beverages, including fluoridated tap water



Foods processed with fluoridated water



Toothpaste and other oral care products



Topical fluoride & dietary supplements

9. I have heard fluoride can cause all kinds of things, from lower IQ to cancer. Can that be true?

No. There is no credible scientific evidence that water fluoridated at the levels used in the United States contributes to or causes disease or poor health. The only proven risk associated with fluoride intake from any source is dental fluorosis which can be lowered with proper use of fluoridated products like toothpaste and mouth rinse.

10. Is bottled water fluoridated?

Most bottled water is not fluoridated. If it is, it will say so on the label. Many bottled waters are filled from municipal water supplies, and some of those sources may be fluoridated. But if fluoride was not added as part of the bottling process, it will not appear on the label. To be sure, call the number on the label for more information.

The information contained in this publication should not be used as a substitute for the medical care and advice of your pediatrician. There may be variations in treatment that your pediatrician may recommend based on individual facts and circumstances.

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