

because many children dislike the foam from toothpaste, and the foam interferes with visibility. Use a “smear” or “rice-size” amount of toothpaste for children younger than 3 years old (apply across the narrow width of the toothbrush, rather than along its length, to decrease the chance of applying an excessive amount); and a “pea-size” of toothpaste should be used in children 3 to 6 years old ([American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry, 2014b](#)).

After the teeth have been cleaned, the teeth are flossed to remove plaque and debris from between the teeth and below the gum margin, where brushing is ineffective. Because young children do not have the dexterity to manipulate dental floss, parents must perform the procedure.

Ideally, the teeth should be cleaned after each meal and especially before bedtime, and the child should be given nothing to eat or drink after the night brushing except water. At times when brushing is impractical, the “swish-and-swallow” method of cleaning the mouth is taught; with a mouthful of water the child rinses the mouth and swallows, repeating the procedure three or four times.*

Fluoride

Fluoride supplementation should be considered for any child. Fluoride, a mineral, is found in water, foods, or drinks in which fluoridated water was used as part of the processing system. Because the water fluoridation process and manufacturing of fluoride toothpaste are almost impossible to standardize in the United States, the dosage of fluoride supplements should be determined in consultation with a medical professional ([American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry, 2014b](#)). Increased fluoride ingestion leads to enamel protein retention, hypomineralization of the enamel and dentin, and disturbance of crystal formation. The effects caused by this change range from barely discernible white fiberlike lines or spots to gray-brown stains or pitted areas. Parents should be cautioned against regular use of fluoridated water or beverages such as bottled water containing fluoride if the community water supply already has an adequate amount of fluoride. Topical fluoride treatments (e.g., fluoride varnish) performed in the dental home is also effective in decreasing caries ([American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry, 2014c](#)).