Fluoride & Dental Health

url: https://www.nidcr.nih.gov/health-info/fluoride  
  
  
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Overview  
Fluoride (said like floor-eyed) is a mineral that occurs naturally in soil, water, and air that has been shown to prevent cavities, or tooth decay. For the past several decades, fluoride has been added to community water supplies and oral care products such as toothpaste and mouth rinse. Fluoride works by strengthening the tooth s hard outer surface called enamel.  
  
You can get fluoride by drinking tap water in communities where the public water system adds fluoride and by using fluoride toothpaste and mouth rinse, as well as from certain foods and beverages. In the dental office, a dentist can apply fluoride varnish or gel, and in some public health programs, children can have fluoride varnish applied to their teeth.  
  
Fluoride can prevent tooth decay across the lifespan; both children and adults benefit from it.  
  
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Helpful Tips  
Find the amount of fluoride in your community s water by checking with your local water utility. Although some bottled waters have the recommended amount of fluoride, many do not. If you have well water, it will need to be tested for fluoride concentration. Your dentist or local health department may be able to assist you.  
Brush with a fluoride toothpaste twice a day, floss regularly, and see a dentist for routine check-ups.  
Ask your child s dentist or doctor about fluoride toothpaste use. You should not use fluoride toothpaste for children younger than age 2 unless you have been advised to do so by a dentist or doctor.  
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Additional Resources  
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Water Fluoridation page  
An overview of community water fluoridation that provides information about benefits, safety, statistics, other fluoride products, guidelines and recommendations.  
  
My Water's Fluoride (CDC)  
My Water's Fluoride allows consumers to learn about the fluoride level in their drinking water.  
  
Private Wells (CDC)  
CDC s web page on private well water and fluoride.  
  
The Story of Fluoridation  
The story of how dental science discovered, and ultimately proved to the world, that fluoride, a mineral found in rocks and soil, prevents tooth decay.  
  
MedlinePlus: Fluoride  
The NIH National Library of Medicine's collection of links to government, professional and non-profit/voluntary organizations with information on water fluoridation.