Fluoride-Consumer

url: https://ods.od.nih.gov/factsheets/Fluoride-Consumer/  
  
  
Fluoride  
Fact Sheet for Consumers  
  
This is a general overview. For more in-depth information, see our health professional fact sheet.  
  
What is fluoride and what does it do?  
Fluoride is a mineral that helps prevent tooth decay and helps keep your bones strong.  
  
How much fluoride do I need?  
The amount of fluoride you need each day depends on your age and sex. Here are the average daily recommended amounts in milligrams (mg).  
  
Life Stage Recommended Amount  
Birth to 6 months 0.01 mg  
Infants 7 12 months 0.5 mg  
Children 1 3 years 0.7 mg  
Children 4 8 years 1 mg  
Children 9 13 years 2 mg  
Teens 14 18 years 3 mg  
Adult men 19+ years 4 mg  
Adult women 19+ years 3 mg  
Pregnant teens and women 3 mg  
Breastfeeding teens and women 3 mg  
What are the sources of fluoride?  
Foods and water do not contain much fluoride naturally. Fluoride is sometimes added to public water supplies called fluoridated water and some bottled waters.  
  
Most of the fluoride you get each day comes from drinking fluoridated water. You can also get fluoride from consuming foods and beverages made with fluoridated water, like tea and coffee.  
  
Most toothpaste and some mouthwashes also contain fluoride. Even though you should not swallow these, they still add slightly to the amount of fluoride you get each day.  
  
What kinds of fluoride dietary supplements are available?  
A few dietary supplements, including some multivitamin/mineral products, contain fluoride. Liquid fluoride drops for children are also available. Fluoride in dietary supplements is usually in the form of sodium fluoride.  
  
Am I getting enough fluoride?  
Most people in the United States get enough fluoride from what they eat and drink as well as from any dental products they use.  
  
What are some effects of fluoride on health?  
Scientists are studying fluoride to understand how it affects health. Here are a few examples of what they have learned.  
  
Tooth decay  
Fluoride helps protect your teeth by strengthening the outer enamel surface. If you get too little fluoride, your teeth might weaken and develop cavities. Cavities can lead to pain, tooth loss, infections, and other health problems.  
  
Surveys show that children and teenagers who drink fluoridated water have fewer cavities. Also, adults who drink fluoridated water have fewer decayed and filled teeth and lose fewer teeth.  
  
Children who take dietary supplements that contain fluoride have a lower risk of tooth decay and tooth loss. Many dentists recommend fluoride supplements for children living in areas where the water supply is not fluoridated or contains too little natural fluoride. We don t know how fluoride supplements affect adults.  
  
Studies suggest that giving a pregnant woman fluoride dietary supplements does not help prevent cavities in her child s teeth.  
  
Bone fractures  
Fluoride helps bones grow and stay strong. Some studies show that taking fluoride dietary supplements or drinking fluoridated water might lower the risk of broken bones. Other studies show no effect on bone strength or fracture risk.  
  
More research is needed to better understand if fluoride dietary supplements and fluoridated water help improve bone health and prevent fractures.  
  
Can fluoride be harmful?  
Infants and children who get too much fluoride while their teeth are forming can develop a condition called dental fluorosis. This can cause white lines or dots, stains, or small dents on the teeth.  
  
Swallowing extremely large amounts of fluoride from dental products or dietary supplements can cause nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, diarrhea, bone pain, and even death in rare cases.  
  
Getting too much fluoride over a long period of time can lead to a condition called skeletal fluorosis. This very rare condition causes joint pain and stiffness, weak bones, muscle loss, and nerve problems.  
  
The daily upper limits for fluoride are listed below.  
  
Life Stage Upper Limit  
Birth to 6 months 0.7 mg  
Infants 7 12 months 0.9 mg  
Children 1 3 years 1.3 mg  
Children 4 8 years 2.2 mg  
Children 9 13 years 10 mg  
Teens 14 18 years 10 mg  
Adults 19 years and older 10 mg  
Pregnant and breastfeeding teens and women 10 mg  
Does fluoride interact with medications or other dietary supplements?  
Fluoride is not known to interact or interfere with any medicines or dietary supplements.  
  
Tell your doctor, pharmacist, and other health care providers about any dietary supplements and prescription or over-the-counter medicines you take. They can tell you if these dietary supplements might interact with your medicines. They can also explain whether the medicines you take might interfere with how your body absorbs or uses fluoride or other nutrients.  
  
Healthful eating  
People should get most of their nutrients from food and beverages, according to the federal government s Dietary Guidelines for Americans. Foods contain vitamins, minerals, dietary fiber, and other components that benefit health. In some cases, fortified foods and dietary supplements are useful when it is not possible to meet needs for one or more nutrients (for example, during specific life stages such as pregnancy). For more information about building a healthy dietary pattern, see the Dietary Guidelines for Americansexternal link disclaimer and the U.S. Department of Agriculture s (USDA s) MyPlate.external link disclaimer  
  
Where can I find out more about fluoride?  
For more information on fluoride  
Office of Dietary Supplements (ODS) Health Professional Fact Sheet on Fluoride  
MedlinePlus, Fluoride in Dietexternal link disclaimer  
For more information on food sources of fluoride  
USDA National Fluoride Database of Selected Beverages and Foodsexternal link disclaimer  
For more advice on choosing dietary supplements  
ODS Frequently Asked Questions: Which brand(s) of dietary supplements should I purchase?  
For information about building a healthy dietary pattern  
MyPlateexternal link disclaimer  
Dietary Guidelines for Americansexternal link disclaimer  
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