

The American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry (AAPD)

The American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry (AAPD) is the recognized authority on children's oral health. As advocates for children's oral health, the AAPD promotes evidence-based policies and clinical guidelines; educates and informs policymakers, parents and guardians, and other health care professionals; fosters research; and provides continuing professional education for pediatric dentists and general dentists who treat children. Founded in 1947, the AAPD is a not-for-profit professional membership association representing the specialty of pediatric dentistry. Its 10,000 members provide primary care and comprehensive dental specialty treatments for infants, children, adolescents and individuals with special health care needs. For further information, please visit the AAPD website at <http://www.aapd.org> or the AAPD's consumer website at <http://www.mychildrensteeth.org>.

ASK YOUR DENTIST ABOUT

FLUORIDE



AMERICA'S PEDIATRIC DENTISTS
THE BIG AUTHORITY on little teeth®

211 East Chicago Avenue, Suite 1600

Chicago, Illinois 60611

(312) 337-2169

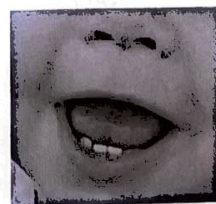
aapdinfo@aapd.org

www.aapd.org; www.mychildrensteeth.org

©2016 American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry
All rights reserved.



AMERICA'S PEDIATRIC DENTISTS
THE BIG AUTHORITY on little teeth®



What is fluoride?

Fluoride is a compound that contains fluorine, a natural element. Using small amounts of fluoride on a routine basis can help prevent tooth decay. In areas where fluoride does not occur naturally, it may be added to community water supplies. Research shows that community water fluoridation has lowered decay rates by over 50 percent, which means that fewer children grow up with cavities. Fluoride can be found as an active ingredient in many dental products such as toothpaste, mouth rinses, gels and varnish.

How does fluoride prevent cavities?

Fluoride inhibits loss of minerals from tooth enamel and encourages remineralization (strengthening areas that are weakened and beginning to develop cavities). Fluoride also affects bacteria that cause cavities, discouraging acid attacks that break down the tooth. Risk for decay is reduced even more when fluoride is combined with a healthy diet and good oral hygiene.

Will my child need fluoride supplements?

Fluoride should be considered for all children between 6 months and 16 years of age who drink fluoride-deficient water. The pediatric dentist takes into account many factors before recommending a fluoride supplement. Your child's risk of developing dental decay and other dietary sources of fluoride are important considerations. Infant formulas contain different amounts of fluoride. Bottled, filtered and well waters also vary in the amount of fluoride they contain. Your pediatric dentist can help determine if your child is receiving – and not exceeding – the recommended amount.

FLUORIDE

How safe is fluoride?

Using fluoride for the prevention and control of decay is proven to be both safe and effective. Nevertheless, products containing fluoride should be stored out of the reach of young children. Too much fluoride could cause fluorosis of developing permanent teeth. Fluorosis usually is mild, with tiny white specks or streaks that often are unnoticeable. In severe cases of fluorosis, the enamel may be pitted with brown discoloration. Development of fluorosis depends on the amount, duration and timing of excessive fluoride intake. The appearance of teeth affected by fluorosis can be greatly improved by a variety of treatments in esthetic dentistry.

What type of toothpaste should my child use?

When determining the risk-benefit of fluoridated toothpaste for very young children, the key issue is mild fluorosis versus preventing devastating dental disease. Talk with the pediatric dentist about your child's risk for developing cavities. Fluoridated toothpaste is recommended for children under two-years-old at moderate or high caries risk. All children ages 2 and above should use toothpaste with fluoride and the American Dental Association Seal of Acceptance.



How much toothpaste should my child use?

Parents should dispense the toothpaste to prevent their young children from swallowing too much fluoride. Brushing twice a day (after breakfast and before bedtime) provides greater benefits than brushing once daily. For children under two-years-old, use a smear of toothpaste. For those aged 2 to 5 years, a pea-sized amount is recommended. Children should spit after brushing to decrease the risk of fluorosis. Rinsing after brushing, however, should be kept to a minimum to increase the beneficial effects of fluoride.

What is topical fluoride?

Topical fluoride is a preventive agent applied to tooth enamel. It comes in a number of different forms. A dental professional places gels or foams in trays that are held against the teeth for up to 4 minutes. Fluoride varnish is brushed or "painted" on the enamel. Varnish is especially useful for young patients and those with special needs who may not tolerate fluoride trays.

Children who benefit the most from fluoride are those at highest risk for decay. Risk factors include a history of previous cavities, a diet high in sugar or carbohydrates, orthodontic appliances, and certain medical conditions such as dry mouth. If your school-age child is at high risk for decay, the pediatric dentist may recommend an at-home fluoride rinse or brush-on gel.