

Solstice



The

Importance



of

Fluoride



# Do Children Need Fluoride for Dental Health?



Regular exposure to fluoride is beneficial to children’s oral health. The following are some of the benefits that children will gain from getting their yearly fluoride treatment from their dentist, as well as regular exposure to fluoride in everyday life:



- **Strengthens enamel:** Fluoride fortifies the outer protective layer of teeth, making it more resistant to acid and decay.
- **Prevents cavities and tooth loss:** It protects against the development of “soft spots” that can turn into cavities.
- **Supports healthy permanent teeth:** Fluoride helps build a solid foundation for strong adult teeth after baby teeth fall out.

## Where can children get fluoride?

There are several ways to ensure your child is getting enough exposure to fluoride to maintain their overall health. Some of the following are key ways that children get exposed to fluoride:



- **Fluoridated Toothpaste:** Children can use a toothpaste containing fluoride when they brush their teeth twice each day.
- **Community Water Supply:** Many communities add fluoride to their water supply. If your community does not, you can ask the dentist or pediatrician for a fluoride tablet prescription.
- **Topical fluoride treatments:** Your child’s dentist can apply fluoride as a topical solution to protect the enamel layer of the teeth.

## Is there such a thing as too much fluoride?

Many parents are concerned about children getting too much exposure to fluoride. Fluoride poisoning is unlikely and difficult to achieve. Drinking water with fluoride and getting yearly fluoride treatments from the dentist are great ways to keep your child’s teeth at their healthiest. Fluoride in water, a long debated topic, is considered important for adults and especially children. It helps protect tooth enamel and stop tooth decay. The American Dental Association (ADA) says fluoride can prevent about 25% of tooth decay over your lifetime. That’s why fluoride is also in most toothpastes.

# There's No Fluoride in my Drinking Water - How Do I Get Fluoride?



**Fluoride is a natural mineral** that appears in water, soil, and a variety of foods. While most water naturally has some fluoride, the amount is usually too low to help prevent cavities.

When fluoride is absorbed in your digestive system, it gets stored in your bones and teeth, where it encourages new bone growth and makes your teeth stronger. This added strength helps keep tooth decay at bay.

Cities and local governments control how much fluoride is in their water supply, a **process called water fluoridation**. The CDC has online tools where you can see if your state participates in water fluoridation.

In addition to cities that have no fluoride or a low supply, you may not be getting enough fluoride for your teeth if you drink mostly bottled water or well water. With that in mind, we will be taking a deeper dive into the use of fluoride for oral health and how you can get enough.

## Is Fluoride Safe?

If your drinking water contains less than 0.7 mg/L of fluoride, you might consider adding more fluoride to your routine. This level is considered safe. However, levels above 1.5 mg/L exceed the World Health Organization's (WHO) guidelines and may cause:

- **Dental fluorosis:** A cosmetic condition that discolors enamel.
- **Skeletal fluorosis:** A rare bone condition from long-term overexposure.



Concerns have also been raised about fluoride's impact on children's cognitive development. The National Toxicology Program (NTP) reviewed the research and found **no conclusive evidence** that fluoride at 0.7 mg/L affects children's IQ. They did, however, call for more research. Additionally, studies have not found a strong link between fluoride and cancer in humans.

## Fluoride in Well Water



If your household uses well water:

- **Test fluoride levels yearly.** Natural levels can vary and may be too low or too high.
- **If too high,** you can install a fluoride-removal filter.
- **If too low,** fluoride can't be added directly to well water, but you can supplement with fluoride toothpaste or dental treatments.

## How to Get More Fluoride

The CDC suggests that your dentist or doctor should check if daily fluoride supplements are needed. These supplements can be taken as a liquid or tablets, usually twice a day. For more information, visit the ADA's page on fluoride supplements.

When talking with your dentist or doctor, you might find out that you and your child might not need supplements if you're drinking tap water at work, school, or daycare. Your intake may also be high enough if you're a regular user of fluoride toothpaste.



In conclusion, knowing how fluoride helps keep your teeth healthy is important for everyone. Fluoride in water and toothpaste helps cut down the chances of tooth decay. It is key to make sure you're getting enough, especially if you mostly drink bottled or well water. By staying informed and taking action, you can keep your smile and your family's smiles bright and healthy. It also helps to have **quality dental insurance** for your routine checkups and office visits.