



Fluoride information

Where is fluoride found?

Fluoride is not a medication. It is a mineral found naturally in food, rocks, air, soil, plants, rivers and lakes that flow into groundwater. All fresh and sea water contains some fluoride.

'Water fluoridation' is the addition of fluoride to water supplies that are low in fluoride and is a cost-effective way of preventing tooth decay.



- Fluoride in your drinking water is like a constant 'repair kit' for your teeth. It strengthens teeth against plaque acid attacks which are produced after eating or drinking anything containing sugar. Fluoride can also reverse the early stages of tooth decay.
- If you choose to drink bottled water, check the label for fluoride content. If using a water filter, select one that does not remove fluoride. Manufacturers can advise on this. If your drinking water is not fluoridated, you drink bottled water, or you are on tank water, ask your dental practitioner for advice on other options for gaining the benefits of fluoride.

The current Australian Guidelines advise that fluoride supplements should not be used, and fluoride tablets/drops are no longer available in Western Australia. The use of supplements in children under 6 years of age has been associated with an increased risk of dental fluorosis (white markings or mottling on the adult teeth).

Fluoride toothpaste

The Australian Guidelines for the use of fluoride toothpaste are:

- No toothpaste should be used for children up to 17 months.
- Use only a 'pea sized' amount of low fluoride toothpaste for children 18 months to 5 years.
- Use adult strength toothpaste for children 6 and over.
- Supervise children's toothbrushing at least until they are 7 or 8.
- Ensure children brush at least twice a day, once in the morning and before bed at night, using a soft toothbrush.
- Young children should not be permitted to lick or eat toothpaste.
- Spit out and **do not** rinse after brushing.

Children up to 6 years of age tend to swallow rather than spit out most of the toothpaste that goes into their mouth. Adding water to rinse the mouth increases the likelihood of swallowing the toothpaste.

Fluoride mouth rinse

Children below the age of 6 years should not use fluoride mouth rinse. Fluoride mouth rinse might be used by people aged 6 years or more who have an increased risk of developing dental decay. Fluoride mouth rinse should be used at a time of day when toothpaste is not used, and it should not be a substitute for brushing with fluoridated toothpaste. After rinsing, mouth rinse should be spat out, not swallowed.

For a healthy smile

To achieve and keep healthy teeth and gums:

- eat a healthy diet
- limit sugary foods and drinks
- brush twice a day with a fluoride toothpaste
- spit out, don't rinse.
- have regular dental checks.

For further information please discuss with your dental practitioner

Would you like more information or to provide feedback?

This document can be made available in alternative formats such as braille, audio tape or electronically on request.



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