

**Is fluoride safe?**

- As with other nutrients, fluoride is safe and effective when used and consumed properly. From time to time, opponents of fluoridation have questioned its safety and effectiveness. None of these charges has ever been substantiated by generally accepted science. After 50 years of research and practical experience, the overwhelming weight of scientific evidence indicates that fluoridation of community water supplies is both safe and effective.
- Too much fluoride exposure can cause mottling or weakening of developing teeth (fluorosis)
  - Always supervise young children when they brush so the toothpaste is not eaten
  - Do not use fluoridated toothpaste with your infant/toddler until they can spit in the sink

**How does fluoride prevent cavities?**

- Fluoride works topically (i.e. from the fluoride bathing the tooth)
- Systemic fluoride (in drinking water or as supplements) also works topically
  - Increases the fluoride content in saliva
- Fluoride replaces less acid resistant minerals in the tooth enamel complex
- Teeth with high fluoride mineral content are harder for the bacteria to break down, = less cavities
- Fluoride inhibits bacteria growth

**Where do we get fluoride?**

- Fluoride can occur naturally in ground water that you drink from a well
  - Varies in concentration from place to place
- Some municipalities add fluoride to the city water you drink
- Some bottled water companies add fluoride to their water (always look at the label)
- Fluoride can be given as a vitamin supplement prescribed by your physician or dentist
- Fluoride is in most all toothpastes
- There are fluoride rinses available

**How does our office use fluoride?**

- We weigh the benefits of fluoride for erupted teeth against the risk of fluorosis for un-erupted teeth
  - We recommend fluoride products and supplements for patients at high risk for cavities
  - We do not recommend fluoride supplementation for low risk patients
- Before prescribing fluoride supplements:
  - We determine the level of fluoride in your drinking water
  - We determine all other areas of fluoride intake (toothpaste, rinses, etc)
- We recommend topical fluoride rinses and pastes when trying to encourage re-mineralization
- When in doubt, we err on the side of caution and do not recommend systemic supplementation
- We do not recommend fluoridated toothpastes or rinses for young children who might swallow it

