



FLUORIDE OPTIONS FOR FAMILIES

Fluoride is a naturally occurring mineral found in soil, water, and air. Fluoride is often added to drinking water, toothpaste and mouth rinses because of its ability to prevent tooth decay and strengthen teeth.

To prevent tooth decay, it's important that kids get plenty of fluoride. Luckily there are many options for kids and adults to get fluoride at home, at dental and doctor's offices, and even at schools and other community locations.

To prevent decay, it's important to use a combination of fluoride options.

Sammie's parents make sure she drinks plenty of fluoridated water, and they help her brush with fluoride toothpaste and floss twice a day.

FLUORIDATED WATER

Fluoride occurs naturally in most water sources. Some water supplies naturally have adequate amounts of fluoride to prevent tooth decay, and some have too much. Communities often adjust the fluoride levels in public water to the amount needed to safely prevent tooth decay.

Fluoridated water is safe & effective for children and adults. Fluoride in public water is monitored and must meet strict safety standards. If your family has well water, consider testing to ensure it has the correct amount of fluoride, and ask your doctor about fluoride supplementation if levels are low.

Drinking fluoridated water regularly, in combination with using fluoride dental products, can be effective in preventing tooth decay.



FLUORIDE TOOTHPASTE

Fluoride toothpaste should be used as soon as baby's first tooth appears.

A grain-of-rice-sized amount should be used twice a day from the first tooth until 3 years of age, following which a pea-sized amount should be used twice a day.

To prevent your child from swallowing excess toothpaste, make sure they spit after brushing, and avoid using flavored toothpaste other than mint.

Henry brushes with fluoride tooth paste twice a day, and has fluoride varnish applied by his pediatrician's office every 6 months.

Alex uses fluoride mouth rinse after brushing with a fluoride toothpaste. When the dentist found a cavity last year, he had it treated with SDF.

FLUORIDE MOUTHRINSE

Fluoride mouthwashes are recommended for children 6 years of age and older, in a “spit and swish” manner.

Like fluoride toothpaste, fluoride mouthwash is available over the counter. However, fluoride rinses are most beneficial for children over 6 who are at high risk for tooth decay.



Olivia’s parents help her brush with fluoride toothpaste, but she also has fluoride varnish applied to her teeth every 3 months to make sure her teeth are protected.



FLUORIDE VARNISH

Fluoride varnish is a liquid that can be applied to the teeth with a small brush by a trained professional.

It is recommended that fluoride varnish be applied 2-4 times a year as soon as baby’s first tooth appears.

Fluoride varnish is most effective at preventing tooth decay when combined with regular brushing using a fluoride toothpaste and flossing.

SILVER DIAMINE FLUORIDE (SDF)

SDF is a liquid medication that can stop, treat, and protect against tooth decay. Similar to fluoride varnish, SDF can be applied to a cavity using a small brush by a professional.

SDF can prevent the need to drill and fill cavities. Once applied to the cavity, SDF will stain the cavity black. If the cavity is on a baby tooth, the adult tooth that grows in its place will not be stained. Stains can be covered using a tooth-colored filling by a dentist.

For these reasons, SDF is a great option for stopping and treating tooth decay. It’s also an especially good option for small children, people with developmental disabilities, or others who have difficulties accessing oral health care.



Liam had two cavities treated with SDF. In the same appointment, he had fluoride varnish applied to his teeth to protect against future decay. His parents are testing their water at home to make sure it has enough fluoride.