



Tap into Healthy Teeth

Keeping kids' teeth healthy requires more than just daily brushing. During a routine well-child exam, you may be surprised to find the doctor examining your child's teeth and asking you about your water supply. That's because fluoride, a substance that's found naturally in water, plays an important role in healthy tooth development and cavity prevention.

What Is Fluoride?

Fluoride is a natural element found in the earth's crust as well as in water and air. It's also considered a nutrient because our bodies need fluoride to grow and develop properly. Decades ago, scientists discovered that kids who naturally had more fluoride in their drinking water had fewer cavities. In the mid-1940s, communities started to put more fluoride in their water supplies to protect people against tooth decay. For over 60 years, water fluoridation has proved to be a safe and cost-effective way to reduce dental caries (cavities). Today, water fluoridation is estimated to reduce tooth decay by 20-40%.

There's fluoride in your toothpaste and even in your water. But how does it work to keep teeth healthy? Fluoride helps because, when teeth are growing, it mixes with tooth enamel - that hard coating on your teeth. That prevents tooth decay, or cavities. But fluoride can help even after your teeth are formed. It works with saliva to protect tooth enamel from plaque and sugars. By using fluoride toothpaste, for instance, everyone can enjoy some cavity protection. Fewer cavities means healthier teeth when you're an adult - and less chance of having to wear false teeth (dentures) when you're old!

Drink Away Your Cavities?

Fluoride - n. (*floor-ide*) is a mineral that helps keep teeth strong, especially in kids and teens. Tap water contains fluoride and other nutrients that you usually won't get in bottled water.

Just how effective is fluoridated water? Thanks to it, dentists say half of kids between 5 and 17 have **never** had a cavity in their permanent teeth. We hope you're one of them!

REMINDER:

Turn the water **OFF** while you brush your teeth and save up to **4 gallons** each time.

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SECRET DECODER PUZZLE

STEP 1: Start with #1. Fill in the missing letters in the words. Use the picture clues if you need help.

1. K L A



2. C H S I C S

3. G R A E



4. E A



5. S T A E

6. B R

7. F L S



8. L P A R D



STEP 2: Cross out the letters that you wrote, in order from 1 - 8.

O A F O P T L K I F U F W H O T T R U E A O S I D E O E

STEP 3: With the remaining letters, fill in the blanks below to reveal the answer to this secret message...

Everyone needs this mineral to keep their teeth and gums healthy. You'll find it in toothpaste and your drinking water.

