



What is fluoride?

Fluoride comes from fluorine, which is a natural element found in rocks, coal and clay. Using small amounts of fluoride every day can help prevent tooth decay.

Fluoride is naturally in water, but it may also be added to local drinking water supplies. Adding fluoride to the water supply has been shown to lower cavities by 50%.

Fluoride is an ingredient in many toothpastes.

How does it work?

Fluoride helps teeth by strengthening areas that are weakened when a cavity starts to form. Fluoride also fights the bacteria that live in our mouths. These bacteria form acids that wear down teeth.

Is fluoride safe?

Yes. Fluoride use has been proven to prevent tooth decay. Help or watch your child when brushing teeth if they are young. They may get an upset stomach if they swallow too much toothpaste. Please ask your child's dentist if you have any questions.

How much toothpaste should I use?

- Under age 3: a small smear of toothpaste
- Age 3-5: a pea-sized amount



What are fluoride supplements?

Some children have a very high risk for getting cavities. A dentist can tell you your child's risk level by asking about:

- How many cavities they have already had
- Brushing and flossing
- How much sugar they eat and drink

The dentist may prescribe more fluoride if your child is at high risk for cavities. Extra fluoride can come as an oral (by mouth) supplement or it can be a toothpaste, mouth-rinse or gel.

At Boston Children's Hospital, every child gets a fluoride treatment during their regular check-up visit.

Will my child need extra fluoride?

This is a great question to ask your child's dentist. We recommend that every child use fluoride toothpaste every day. But every child is different and the dentist will let you know how much more your child may need after your appointment.

Contact us

For more information, visit
bostonchildrens.org/dentistry

To make an appointment, call
(617) 355-6571.