

# Fluoride

## FAST FACTS

Fluoride is a natural substance that is found in rocks, soil, and water. It prevents tooth decay in children and adults.

### Fluoride helps keep teeth healthy by:

- Stopping the growth of bacteria that cause cavities
- Strengthening tooth enamel
- Reversing early tooth decay by replacing and preventing the loss of minerals that make teeth healthy



The U.S. Public Health Service recommends 0.7 parts per million of fluoride in drinking water, or about 3 drops of fluoride in a 55-gallon barrel, to prevent tooth decay.

Today, the majority of the U.S. population receives fluoridated water.\*

73%



\* Decisions about water fluoridation are made at the state or local level.

### You can get fluoride by:

- Drinking local tap water that has fluoride in it
- Using fluoride toothpaste/ mouth rinse
- Getting varnish/gel at the dentist's office
- Taking a dietary supplement



After adding fluoride to the community water supply, tooth decay decreased in both children and adults, and complete tooth loss in older adults became much less common.



1940s



2014

Tooth Decay  
in U.S. Schoolchildren



1960-62



2017-19

Complete Tooth Loss in  
U.S. Adults Ages 65-74

At about age 2 (or sooner if a dentist or doctor suggests it), brush your child's teeth with a tiny amount of fluoride toothpaste.



For children aged 3 to 6, parents should put the toothpaste on the brush. Use only a pea-sized amount of fluoride toothpaste. Encourage your child to spit out the toothpaste rather than swallow it.



Additional resources



National Institute of Dental  
and Craniofacial Research