

Fluoride Prevention – Tips and Guidelines

Fluoride is an element, which has been shown to be beneficial to teeth. However, too little or too much fluoride can be detrimental to the teeth. Little or no fluoride will not strengthen the teeth to help them resist cavities. Excessive fluoride ingestion by preschool-aged children can lead to dental fluorosis, which is a chalky white to even brown discoloration of the permanent teeth. Many children often get more fluoride than their parents realize. Being aware of a child's potential sources of fluoride can help parents prevent the possibility of dental fluorosis.

Some of these sources are:

- Too much fluoridated toothpaste at an early age.
- The inappropriate use of fluoride supplements.
- Hidden sources of fluoride in the child's diet.

Two and three year olds may not be able to expectorate (spit out) fluoride-containing toothpaste when brushing. As a result, these youngsters may ingest an excessive amount of fluoride during tooth brushing. Toothpaste ingestion during this critical period of permanent tooth development is the greatest risk factor in the development of fluorosis.

Excessive and inappropriate intake of fluoride supplements may also contribute to fluorosis. Fluoride drops and tablets, as well as fluoride fortified vitamins should not be given to infants younger than six months of age. After that time, fluoride supplements should only be given to children after all of the sources of ingested fluoride have been accounted for and upon the recommendation of your pediatrician or pediatric dentist.

Certain foods contain high levels of fluoride, especially powdered concentrate infant formula, soy-based infant formula, infant dry cereals, creamed spinach, and infant chicken products. Please read the label or contact the manufacturer. Some beverages also contain high levels of fluoride, especially decaffeinated teas, white grape juices, and juice drinks manufactured in fluoridated cities.

Parents can take the following steps to decrease the risk of fluorosis in their children's teeth:

- Use baby tooth cleanser on the toothbrush of the very young child.
- Place only a pea sized drop of children's toothpaste on the brush when brushing.
- Account for all of the sources of ingested fluoride before requesting fluoride supplements from your child's physician or pediatric dentist.
- Avoid giving any fluoride-containing supplements to infants until they are at least 6 months old.

- Obtain fluoride level test results for your drinking water before giving fluoride supplements to your child (check with local water utilities).

*If you have a **private well**, you can get your water tested at local water testing labs. Call them for information about how to submit water samples:

*Water Testing Labs of Maryland, Inc (No. Virginia) - Toll Free **800-200-5323**

Bring the results to us or your pediatrician so that the appropriate dosage of supplemental fluoride may be prescribed for your child.

If you have **public drinking water**, your fluoride level is controlled by the local water supply company. A yearly report is available that provides the test results of your water. Usually no action is needed.

Fairfax Water

- Customer Service: 703-698-5800, TTY 711 (Mon. – Fri. 8 a.m. to 6 p.m.)
- Emergencies: 703-698-5613

Town of Herndon

- Customer Service: 703-435-6814, TTY 711 (Mon. – Fri. 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.)
- Emergencies: 703-435-6846

Town of Vienna

- Customer Service: 703-255-6385, TTY 711 (Mon. – Fri. 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.)
- Emergencies: after hours - 703-255-6366

For information about **private water wells**, please contact the Fairfax County Health Department at 703-246-2201, TTY 711 (Mon. – Fri. 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.).

Recommended Fluoride Supplementation Dosages (for providers):

6 month – 3 year olds: .25mg/day

3 year olds – 6 year olds: .5mg/day

6 year olds – 11 year olds: 1mg/day

*These recommendations based on average weight of child. Adjust accordingly.