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Fluoride in your water

Fluoride has profoundly reduced the incidence of dental decay since the 1960's, when its anticavity properties were discovered. In adults, daily exposure to fluoride toothpastes, rinses, or gels can prevent harmful oral bacteria from producing the acid that "eats away" tooth structure. The best defense against decay, however, is by incorporating the fluoride into developing permanent teeth during childhood. The fluoride enters a child's bloodstream and is carried by the "bricklayer" cells that are building an adult tooth. These cells insert the fluoride throughout the enamel and dentin as it is formed. When the tooth enters the mouth, it has a built-in defense against bacterial decay.

The levels of fluoride during this period should be as closely controlled as possible because too much fluoride will cause the enamel to have chalky white spots and in severe cases brown spots (which are permanent on adult teeth). Public water supplies have fluoride added to an optimal level so that children do not need any extra attention. Private wells, however, have only naturally occurring fluoride, usually at levels below the proper dosage. Therefore, we recommend that you have your water tested and give your child supplemental fluoride (drops or tablets) depending on the amount of fluoride in your well water.

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 you 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.