

Fluoride and Tooth Decay

WHAT IS TOOTH DECAY?

Tooth enamel is hard yet porous. Plaque on the surface of your teeth can produce acids that seep into the pores (rods) of the enamel and break down its internal structure. This process, called **demineralization**, can create a **weak spot** on the surface of the tooth that may become a cavity if left untreated.



Decay often begins on biting surfaces, between the teeth, on exposed roots, and around existing fillings

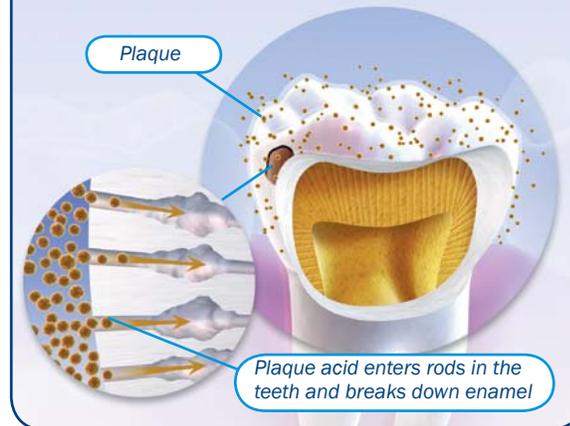


Untreated, decay spreads into the tooth and can destroy the tooth structure



Decay enters and infects the pulp

Plaque acid causes demineralization



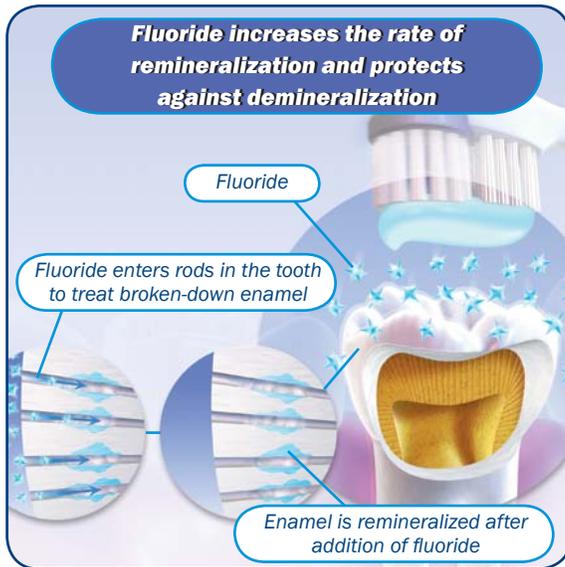
THE ROLE OF FLUORIDE

Fluoride helps prevent tooth decay by slowing the breakdown of enamel and speeding up the **remineralization** process. The new enamel crystals that form are harder, larger, and more resistant to acid.

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TREATING AND PREVENTING TOOTH DECAY

Common sources of fluoride are fluoridated drinking water, toothpaste, and mouth rinse. Inform your dentist if your drinking water is not fluoridated. He or she may recommend

that you use high-concentration fluoride gels, mouth rinses, drops, or tablets.

To help strengthen weak spots and exposed roots and prevent the early stages of tooth decay, brush regularly with a fluoridated toothpaste like Crest[®] Cavity Protection. In one study, patients using Crest Cavity Protection developed **41% fewer cavities** than patients using a toothpaste without fluoride.*



Daily brushing with Crest Cavity Protection, as well as regular flossing and professional cleanings, will help prevent cavities and preserve your oral health.

Ask your dental professional how this Crest product can help you:

- Crest Cavity Protection

* Jensen ME, Kohout F. The effect of a fluoridated dentifrice on root and coronal caries in an older adult population. *J Am Dent Assoc.* 1988;117:829-832.

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Fluoride: Your Protection Against Cavities

FLUORIDE HELPS PEOPLE OF ALL AGES:

- Fluoride makes the tooth surface harder
- Fluoride helps prevent cavities

FLUORIDE CAN BE FOUND IN:



Drinking Water



Toothpaste



Certain Mouthrinses

DRINKING WATER

DOES YOUR DRINKING WATER CONTAIN THE CORRECT AMOUNT OF FLUORIDE?



- Adding fluoride to municipal drinking water is one of the easiest and most cost-effective methods of protecting children and adults from tooth decay.
- Not certain about the fluoride level in your water system? Ask your dentist.
- If your water does not contain fluoride, your dentist may recommend prescribing fluoride tablets or drops for you and your family.
- Support water fluoridation in your community.
- Make sure you and your children drink fluoridated water every day.
- Give your kids water and minimize their intake of soft drinks.
- Remember – bottled water may be very popular now, but it may not contain fluoride.

TOOTHPASTE

SHOULD YOU USE A FLUORIDE-CONTAINING TOOTHPASTE?



- Fluoride-containing toothpaste helps to prevent cavities in children AND adults.
- Supervise your children when they brush their teeth.
- Kids under age 6 should only use a “pea size” dab of fluoride-containing toothpaste.

FLUORIDE-CONTAINING MOUTHRINES

SHOULD YOU USE A FLUORIDE-CONTAINING MOUTHRINSE?



- This source of fluoride also helps stop tooth decay in children AND adults.
- Many brands are available in your local grocery or drug store.
- Check with your local board of education - your kids may already receive fluoride mouthrinses at school.

REMEMBER THE CAVITY FIGHTERS:



- Fluoride (from water, toothpaste, and mouthrinses).
- Sealants placed on teeth.
- Sugar-free foods and drinks.
- Daily brushing and flossing (especially after eating).
- Regular dental visits.

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