



CHAIRSIDE GUIDE

for Talking to Your Patients About Fluoride



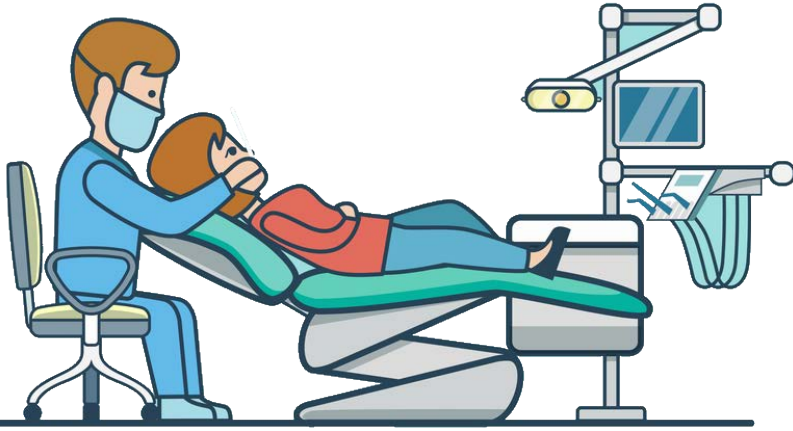
Talking with your patients about fluoride can be difficult – there is a lot of misinformation out there and it can often seem like you're at a loss for words. Here's a few phrases to start or reframe the discussion about fluoride.

"Some of my other patients have asked a similar question. I'd be happy to share my expertise and answer any questions you may have..."

"I can understand where you're coming from. Let me walk you through what the scientific evidence says..."

"It can be difficult to find unbiased information about this topic the internet, so let me see if I can clarify some of what you've read..."

"I'm also a parent, so I understand why you might ask that question. Let me explain why this is so beneficial for your child(ren)..."



Are You Getting Enough Fluoride?

WATER

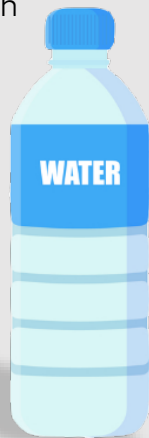
"How much water do you/your family drink? Is it bottled or tap?"

Some Tap...

Fluoridated water helps to strengthen and protect your teeth. Communities that fluoridate their drinking water see lower rates of tooth decay.

Exclusively Bottled...

Most bottled waters do not contain enough fluoride to protect your teeth from cavities. If your water is fluoridated, you may want to consider drinking tap water to further protect your teeth.



TOOTHPASTE

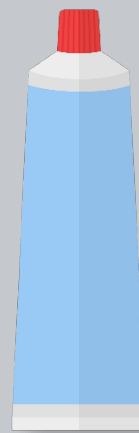
"How often do you/your family brush with fluoride toothpaste?"

Often/Regularly

If your local drinking water is not fluoridated, brushing with a fluoride toothpaste is extra important to ensure your teeth are protected from decay and rot.

Seldom/Not at All

If your community does not fluoridate their water, you might want to start brushing with a fluoride toothpaste to benefit from its strengthening properties.

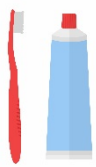


HELPFUL LINKS

- American Academy of Pediatrics
www.ilikemyteeth.org/fluoridation
- American Fluoridation Society
www.americanfluoridationsociety.org
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
www.cdc.gov/fluoridation

Words and Phrases to Avoid

- Negative terms:** Harm, poison, chemical
- Dismissive phrases:** "Don't trust everything you read on the internet." "There's nothing to worry about."
- Jargon:** Perio, inflammation, calculus



~ Frequently Asked Questions ~



What is fluoride? I've heard it's a chemical/toxic waste byproduct.

"Fluoride is a naturally-occurring mineral found in the ground and water across the world. It helps to strengthen your teeth so they're more resistant to cavities. It can even reverse the early stages of tooth decay. The fluoride added to water systems is tested and certified by the National Science Foundation (NSF) to be safe."

Key Points

- + Naturally-occurring
- + Strengthens teeth



What is fluorosis? I've heard it's caused by overexposure to fluoride.

"Fluorosis is a cosmetic change in the appearance of tooth enamel that is stronger than the rest of the tooth. It usually occurs in the form of white spots. It's not painful and it doesn't affect the health of your teeth. It does not develop in children over the age of eight, once the adult teeth have formed."



Why do I need to drink fluoridated water (brush with fluoride toothpaste) if I brush with fluoride toothpaste (drink fluoridated water)?

"Fluoride works both on the surface and internally. Research shows that prevention works best when we expose the outside of our teeth to fluoride on a regular basis, like brushing. Drinking fluoridated water bathes your teeth in fluoride and allows your body to distribute it to where it is needed. Any additional fluoride your body doesn't need is excreted."

Key Points

- + Fluoride works both topically and systemically
- + Both are important for healthy teeth



Why do they add fluoride to our water? I only eat/drink things that are natural.

"Fluoride is natural – and it's already present in our drinking water in low levels. It's only added to water systems to ensure all drinking water has the optimal level. Plenty of foods you already eat have been fortified for your health: vitamin D in milk, iodine in salt, folic acid in breads. All are naturally present and, added to enrich these foods, have been shown to improve your health."

Key Points

- + Fluoride is all natural
- + It's present in existing water supplies
- + Other foods have been fortified for our benefit



Aren't a lot of communities lowering the level of fluoride in their water, or removing it completely?

"The amount of fluoride that you need hasn't changed – you just have access to more sources, like fluoride mouth-rinses. Since fluoride is available from more sources, the amount added to drinking water can be lowered to ensure people are receiving the recommended levels. Though some communities have chosen to stop water fluoridation completely, this is usually due to financial concerns. After doing so, these communities have seen increased rates of cavities."



If fluoride is so effective, why do I/my children still get cavities?

"Many factors can impact oral health, such as receiving regular dental care and diet/nutrition. Fluoride alone does not guarantee that you won't get cavities, but it's been proven that it does reduce the rate of tooth decay."



Doesn't fluoride only benefit children? If so, why should I be concerned with it?

"Tooth decay can impact people of all ages. Children benefit greatly from fluoride because their teeth and bones are still forming. As adults, we benefit from fluoride's ability to prevent further decay and help rebuild teeth if we already have damage. For senior citizens, fluoride is even more important due to the medications and mobility issues that affect their oral health."



I've heard fluoride affects children's IQ scores. I don't want that happening to my kids.

"The reports that fluoride negatively affects children's IQ scores were taken from studies from countries with significantly higher fluoride levels (10x). Additionally, these studies did not take into consideration other pollutants such as lead and arsenic. A 2014 study conducted in New Zealand (whose fluoride levels are more comparable to the U.S.) showed no link between fluoride levels and IQ."

Key Points

- + Studies were taken outside of the U.S.
- + Didn't factor in other pollutants
- + Studies show no link between fluoride and low IQ scores