



Oxfordshire Community Dental Service

Fluoride - Information for patients

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What is fluoride?






Fluoride is a naturally occurring mineral that is released from rocks into the soil and water.

Most water contains fluoride but in many areas of the country this is not enough to help prevent tooth decay.

Some parts of England add fluoride to the tap water to help prevent tooth decay.

Oxfordshire does not add fluoride to the water supply.

How does fluoride protect teeth?

-  Fluoride helps children and adults protect their teeth throughout their lives.
-  Fluoride helps strengthen the adult (permanent) teeth that are developing in the jaw.
-  Fluoride strengthens the enamel (outside part of the tooth) making it more resistant to tooth decay.
-  Fluoride helps to remineralise the tooth enamel encouraging a better quality enamel to form that is more resistant to acid attack.
-  Less dental treatment is needed to repair teeth.

Choosing the right toothpaste

Check the label on your toothpaste ingredients

Make sure your toothpaste contains the right amount of fluoride. Ask your dental professional if you are unsure.

Children's toothpaste

- i** Children don't need to use special children's toothpaste.
- i** Children of all ages can use family toothpaste, as long as it contains 1,350 to 1,500ppm fluoride.
- i** Children aged 3 and under who don't have tooth decay can use a children's toothpaste containing at least 1,000ppm fluoride.



Children under the age of 3 should use a smear of toothpaste.



Children aged over 3 should use a pea-sized blob of toothpaste.

- i** When your child is able to spit, they should be encouraged to spit out excess toothpaste but not to rinse their mouth with water. Fluoride from the toothpaste is then left on the teeth to help protect them.

- i** Make sure children don't lick or eat toothpaste from the tube.

Adult's toothpaste

Use a family fluoride toothpaste containing 1350 to 1500ppm of fluoride. Use a pea-sized amount.

Prescription toothpaste

Your dentist may prescribe a prescription only higher fluoride toothpaste if you have a higher risk of developing tooth decay.

The two most prescribed fluoride toothpastes contain 2800ppm or 5000ppm fluoride.

Fluoride rinses and mouthwash

Your dentist may prescribe a fluoride rinse containing 2250ppm fluoride.

This should be used daily as well as brushing your teeth twice a day with a fluoride toothpaste.

Fluoride rinse or mouthwash should be used at a different time of the day to toothbrushing so that the fluoride from the toothpaste remains on the teeth to help protect them.

Fluoride varnish

This is when a golden-coloured gel of highly concentrated fluoride is painted onto the tooth's surface by a dentist or dental therapist and/or hygienist.

This only takes a few minutes. It is one of the best options for increasing the availability of topical fluoride regardless of the levels of fluoride in the water supply.

It is recommended for children.

Is fluoride safe?

Yes, the scientific conclusion is that fluoride toothpaste and correctly fluoridated water are safe and a benefit to dental health.

What is fluorosis?

It is important for young children to use the right amount of and type of toothpaste to prevent fluorosis.

Fluorosis is a discolouration caused by too much fluoride whilst the teeth are developing in the gums.

This can happen when children under the age of seven are taking fluoride supplements and live in areas where the water supply is fluoridated.

Dental fluorosis appears as very fine pearly white lines or flecking on the surface of the teeth.

This mild fluorosis can often only be spotted by a dental expert.

Severe fluorosis may lead to the enamel being pitted and discoloured but this is rare.

If you have concerns, please ask your dentist for advice.

Advice for you from your dental professional

Use this QR code to find all Oxfordshire Community Dental Service leaflets. You can also access them in an accessible format.



Accessibility

An accessible version of this leaflet can be found on our website: www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk/cds

If you need the information in another language or format, please contact us.

Get in touch

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Feedback

Our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) provides advice and support to patients, families, and carers, helping to resolve any problems, concerns, or complaints you may have.

Phone	0800 328 7971
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