VALLEYHEALTH

Your Guide to Fluoride

Fluoride is a mineral that helps prevent tooth decay and strengthens teeth. It binds to the tiny crystals that make up your teeth, making them stronger. Both children and adults can benefit from fluoride to keep teeth healthy.

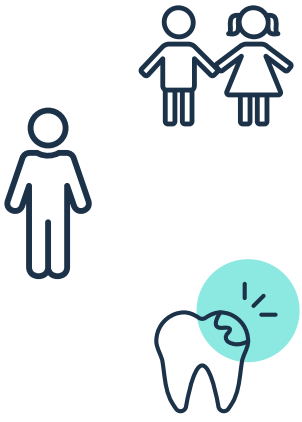
How Fluoride Works

Fluoride helps fight cavities in several ways:

- **Daily use at home:** Fluoride toothpaste protects and strengthens teeth every day at safe levels.
- **Drinking water:** Fluoride in tap water helps strengthen teeth and bones from the inside.
- **Professional treatments:** Dentists and dental hygienists can apply stronger fluoride treatments that also fight bacteria.

Who Can Benefit

Fluoride isn't just for kids—adults benefit too. People who drink sugary or acidic beverages, like coffee or soda, can especially use extra protection.



- **Children:** Regular fluoride toothpaste and professional treatments can reduce the risk of cavities.
- **Adults:** Twice-yearly professional fluoride treatments can help prevent new cavities.
- **High-risk individuals:** Children or adults with more cavity risk may need treatments up to three times a year.

Professional fluoride treatments usually cost about $50 if insurance doesn't cover them. Many insurance plans cover two treatments a year, especially for children.

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Is Fluoride Safe?

Yes. Fluoride in drinking water has been safe since the 1950s at the level recommended by the CDC: **0.7 parts per million.**

- Public health and dental organizations strongly support fluoride for both children and adults.
- Fluoride is recognized by the CDC as one of the top 10 greatest public health advances in history.

Other Ways to Protect Teeth

If you're cautious about fluoride, there are additional ways to support dental health:

- Limit sugary and acidic foods and drinks that wear down tooth enamel.
- Use products with **xylitol,** a natural ingredient that prevents bacteria from sticking to teeth. Check for the ADA approval on toothpaste or other products.
- Remember that fluoride is also present in some foods, like broccoli, certain fish, and canned foods.

Key Takeaways

- Fluoride strengthens teeth and helps prevent cavities for both kids and adults.
- Daily use at home, professional treatments, and safe levels in drinking water all contribute to dental health.
- Even if you limit fluoride, you can protect teeth through healthy eating and xylitol products.
- Fluoride benefits teeth **and** bones, supporting overall health.

Fluoride is a safe and effective way to help your family maintain strong teeth and healthy bones. Ask your dental professional about the right fluoride routine for you or your children.

For more information, visit valleyhealth.org.