

Oral Health *facts*

Fluoride

What is fluoride?

Fluoride comes from minerals in the ground. It is found in water, soil, plants and in many foods and drinks. Fluoride can improve your oral health.

How does fluoride work?

Tooth decay can be stopped and even reversed by fluoride. Each time you eat or drink foods that have sugars or starches, the germs in your mouth make acid that cause tooth decay. The acid attacks the teeth and dissolves some of their minerals. This happens many times during the day. Fluoride can repair these small spots of decay by putting new minerals in the teeth to replace those that are lost.

Does fluoride help adults?

Yes! Fluoride prevents tooth decay in adults. Using fluoride will help teeth last a lifetime.

Where can I get fluoride?

- The easiest way to get fluoride is by drinking water. Many Ohioans drink water that has enough fluoride in it. Ask your doctor or dentist about the fluoride level in your drinking water. They can help you have your water tested. If your water doesn't have enough fluoride, a dentist or doctor can prescribe fluoride tablets or drops for your child.
- Using toothpaste is another way to get fluoride. Most toothpaste has fluoride in it. Choose toothpaste that has the seal of the American Dental Association (ADA) on the tube. This means the toothpaste has been shown to prevent tooth decay. Do not allow children to swallow toothpaste or their adult teeth could come in with white spots or stains on them.
- Children under 3 should use a smear of toothpaste, about the size of a grain of rice.
- Children aged 3 to 6 should use a small dab of toothpaste, about the size of a pea.
- Fluoride is available in mouth rinses and from the office of your doctor or dentist. Not all children need the same amount or type of fluoride. Ask your dentist or doctor about the best ways for your child to get fluoride.