

(NOTE: This document is a guide with suggested responses for health educators and not meant to be distributed to consumers)

No one can feel healthy when their teeth are infected and causing pain. The bad news is that tooth decay is still very common. The good news is that cavities are easy to prevent. Fluoride is safe, effective, and an excellent way to help prevent decay before it begins!

1. Do adults need fluoride? Should they be getting fluoride varnish?

Suggested Response: *Fluoride helps protect teeth in adults as well as children. It is available in several forms. Daily fluoride exposure for an adult is especially important if they have risk factors (such as history of cavities, frequent carbohydrate consumption, poor oral hygiene, dry mouth) for cavities. Adults should ask their dental professional if having a professional fluoride treatment is right for them.*

2. What is best practice for the use of fluoride varnish?

Suggested Response: *Fluoride varnish is a dental treatment that can help prevent tooth decay, slow it down, or stop it from getting worse. Fluoride varnish is made with fluoride, a mineral that strengthens tooth enamel (outer coating on teeth). Once your child has a tooth, your medical or dental professional may recommend your child receive fluoride varnish treatments 2 to 4 times per year. The number of treatments depends on how likely it is your child may get a cavity.*

3. What is the recommended dose of fluoride for infants and children?

Suggested Response: *Topical fluoride, like iron and calcium, is a mineral, not a medicine with a specific dosage. Here are the expert recommendations for each source of fluoride:*

- *Water - Water treatment plants make sure they keep the fluoride levels to 0.7 ppm*
- *Toothpaste*
 - *Age birth to three- small smear on toothbrush twice a day*
 - *Ages three to six- small pea size on toothbrush twice per day*
 - *Ages seven through adulthood- pea size on toothbrush twice per day*
- *Mouth rinse - Should not be used by children under age six*
- *Fluoride varnish – Dental or medical provider's recommendation*

4. Are fluoride supplements available to purchase over the counter or by prescription only?

Suggested Response: *Fluoride supplements are intended to compensate for fluoride-deficient drinking water. They are offered in tablet and liquid form. The appropriate dosage is dependent on a variety of factors, so they are only available by a prescription from your doctor or dentist.*

5. When babies are exclusively breastfed, do they need fluoride supplementation?

Suggested Response: *Babies do not need fluoride supplementation during the first six months of life, when they are being exclusively fed breast milk or formula. Once they are drinking water, talk to your medical or dental provider to see if prescription fluoride is needed.*

6. Can fluoridated tap water be used to mix infant formula?

Suggested Response: *According to both the American Academy of Pediatrics and the American Dental Association, it is absolutely safe to mix infant formula with fluoridated water. Babies who are exclusively formula fed might have an increased risk for mild dental fluorosis (whiter looking areas on teeth), but it does not affect the health of your child or the health of your child's teeth. Parents and caregivers are encouraged to talk to their dentists about what's best for their child.*

7. Families often tell us they don't like the taste of tap water. Any suggestions?

Suggested Response:

- Try using a carbon filter pitcher, such as Brita.
- Many people add a slice of fruit, such as lemon or lime, or herbs like mint to make water tastier to drink.
- Adding slightly sweeter fruits like slices of orange or strawberries can be fun for kids without adding much sugar.
- The internet has many great ideas to make drinking water fun.

8. What are the oral health considerations when families are using mostly bottled water? Does this practice lead to more dental issues?

Suggested Response: Most bottled water does not contain fluoride, losing an important level of protection against cavities. If you order water from a local company, ask them if they can add fluoride. If not, check with your dental professional on other ways to protect your family's teeth.

9. Does boiling water remove fluoride from fluoridated tap water?

Suggested Response: No, boiling water does not remove fluoride from water. You can also safely freeze water and use carbon filters (commonly found in Brita type pitchers and refrigerators) without removing fluoride.

10. Should young children use toothpaste with fluoride?

Suggested Response: All children should use toothpaste with fluoride. It is very important to use the right amount of toothpaste on the toothbrush according to your child's age.

- For children younger than 3 years, caregivers should begin brushing children's teeth as soon as they appear. Use no more than a smear of toothpaste (or the size of a grain of rice) with fluoride. Brush teeth thoroughly twice per day (morning and before bed).
- For children 3 to 6 years of age, caregivers should dispense no more than a small pea-sized amount of fluoride toothpaste. Brush teeth thoroughly twice per day (morning and night) or as directed by a medical or dental professional. Supervise children's brushing to minimize swallowing of toothpaste.

11. Is it important to determine if families have access to fluoridated drinking water?

Suggested Response: Fluoride is added to water for the same reasons that vitamin D is added to milk: it's a simple and easy way to provide many people with an important health benefit. Finding out the fluoride content in the water your family drinks will help you know what other steps you should take to keep your family's teeth healthy.

12. How do I learn the fluoride content of our local water supply?

Suggested Response: To find if your municipal water supply has adequate amounts of fluoride you can go to the CDC website at https://nccd.cdc.gov/DOH_MWF/Default/Default.aspx or call your local water treatment plant.

13. Is it possible to get too much fluoride?

Suggested Response: It is highly unlikely your family can get too much fluoride. Fluoride is a mineral that has been proven safe and effective against cavities. The most common result of over exposure to fluoride is cosmetic; some lighter areas can appear on the tooth surface that do not harm the teeth.

14. Many clients won't use fluoride saying it is toxic. What do you recommend we say to those clients?

People who are hesitant to use fluoride to keep their family's teeth healthy have many and varied reasons for that hesitance. To keep from overwhelming them with facts, it is important to first determine the specific concern so you can focus on what is most relevant to them. Once you know the concerns, you can provide them with evidence-based answers and reliable websites, if appropriate. For more details, see "[Fluoride Facts: Evidence-based answers for health educators in Kansas](#)"

Suggested Response: I'm curious to know what concerns you have about fluoride?