

Fluoride and what you should know

Did you know fluoride was discovered in Colorado? There was a town near Colorado Springs and they saw that none of the children were developing cavities. The only explanation was the fluoride levels in the water. Fluoride is one of the greatest advances in dentistry over the past 50 years.

Fluoride is a systemic nutrient taken by way of water containing fluoride naturally or by fluoridation, from prescribed dietary supplements, and, in small amounts, from food. For children, half of the fluoride ingested is deposited in the bones and teeth. Teeth store the highest amounts of fluoride of any bone in the body and most of it is stored on the surface. Fluoride enhances the re-mineralization of teeth and therefore makes them stronger. People who have fluoride in their water experience 40-65% less decay than those without the fluoride.

The fluoride works in three ways on your teeth. First, it makes the tooth's structure more stable and less susceptible to decay. Secondly, it makes the teeth less susceptible to acid we ingest on a daily basis, such as soda and sugar. Finally, it makes the crystal like structure that teeth are composed of stronger and harder therefore making our teeth less sensitive.

As hygienists we recommend getting a professional dose of fluoride applied to your teeth at least once a year as well as rinsing with a fluoride mouth rinse and using fluoride toothpaste on a daily basis. The professional fluoride application has a higher concentration of fluoride and is only absorbed by the teeth because it is directly applied to your teeth. The in office application is especially helpful in preventing the cavities in between the teeth. It is especially important to have children receive this once a year in office application. We know they do not have their baby teeth for life, however their adult teeth are right behind those baby teeth and we want to do everything we can to protect your children from decay at an early age.

For the elderly, fluoride helps prevent what is referred to as "root caries". They tend to develop caries more towards the root of the tooth because of the years of wear and tear. If they live in an area with a fluoridated water supply as well as receive the yearly in office application the incidence of caries decreases by half.

So the next time you are at your six-month hygiene appointment, ask your hygienist for a fluoride treatment. It's painless!

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