



Note the opaque white patches of early decay near the gums on almost every tooth

Fluoride is used in dentistry for two reasons:

- to prevent decay
- to remineralise damaged areas of the teeth

Most capital cities in Australia have fluoride in the water supply. There is also fluoride in most toothpastes, mouthrinses and in fluoride gels and varnishes used by dentists.

Low levels of fluoride in your mouth from water and fluoride toothpaste are best at preventing tooth decay. Extra fluoride is needed to protect teeth when water fluoridation is not available, or when patients have a higher risk of decay.

Over time, plaque acid can dissolve layers of tooth crystals below the surface. 'White spots' appear where the tooth is damaged and fragile, and become holes if the acid damage continues.

Early decay (seen in the photo above) can be reversed by reducing the acid attack and increasing the recovery process in the mouth.

Fluoride helps repair the dissolved tooth crystals. Decay already present can also be stopped or slowed down, instead of progressing into bigger and bigger holes

Further information

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Your checklist

- brush AT LEAST twice a day with FLUORIDE toothpaste and a soft brush
- spit don't rinse
- use the toothpaste recommended for your age group
- drink tap water
- use a high-strength fluoride toothpaste or fluoride mouthrinse if advised by your dental professional
- check with your dentist how to make up fluoridated water for home-use if your water supply is low in fluoride

Extra fluoride for special needs prescribed by your dental professional

A smear of toothpaste . .

There are times when you may want to brush your teeth, but you have not got your toothbrush. This can happen when you unexpectedly stay overnight at a friend's place, or when you packed in a hurry. Put a pea-sized dab of toothpaste on your finger and rub it around on all of your teeth. Swish it thoroughly around your mouth, then 'spit and don't rinse'.

Fluoride products for home use

Your dentist will choose a treatment that is best for you. This may involve brushing more often, brushing your teeth with a stronger fluoride toothpaste, or using a fluoride mouthrinse. Home use products contain lower strength fluorides than products which are used in the dental clinic, but take care that you follow the treatment plan, and keep these products out of the reach of young children.

Fluoride in the dental surgery

Various fluoride treatments may be applied by your dental professional in the dental surgery. These products will contain high strength fluoride and will be used for high risk patients who need special care.

Consult your dental professional before beginning to use additional fluoride products

Home use of fluoride

The use of fluoride benefits children and adults

Fluoride

Fluoride



**Fluoride protects your teeth.
Home use of fluoride is important in
preventing dental decay and stopping
early decay from getting worse.**

Fluoride

- helps early decay to remineralise or recover
- strengthens the teeth against acid attack

Fluoride protects and toughens the outer surface of your teeth throughout your lifetime.

Fluoride can come from:

- water from a fluoridated mains supply
- toothpaste
- mouthwash or fluoride mouthrinse
- naturally occurring in foods and drinks
- high concentration fluoride products prescribed by your dentist

Not all fluoride products and treatments are equal.

Drink fluoridated water

The most important way that you can take care of your own teeth and prevent dental decay is to drink fluoridated water.

If you live in an area where there is fluoride in the water supply, choose tap water for drinking and cooking.

People living in non-fluoridated areas can make their own fluoridated drinking water. Check with your dentist:

- what is the fluoride concentration of the water supply in your area
- how to make up fluoridated water for home-use



Toothpastes

How should I brush? Every surface of every tooth, two times every day, using fluoride toothpaste.

When? After breakfast, and last thing at night before bed.

What toothpaste should I use? Three different strength fluoride toothpastes are available in Australia:

- junior or children's toothpaste (400–550 ppm); ages 18 months to 6 years
- standard toothpaste (1,000–1,500 ppm); ages 6+ years
- high concentration toothpaste (5,000 ppm.); prescribed by your dental professional for ages 13+ years

Why? Strong teeth; great breath.

'Spit don't rinse'

Rinsing after tooth brushing washes away much of the fluoride in your mouth and reduces the time that your teeth are getting their 'mini fluoride treatment'. Brush twice a day with fluoride toothpaste, and 'spit don't rinse'.

Toothpaste with fluoride is important for everyone, but is vital for preventing tooth decay if you live in an area with low fluoride water.



Young children need help brushing

Young children up to 6 years of age swallow most of the food, drinks AND TOOTHPASTE that goes into their mouth. Encourage them to spit out the toothpaste after brushing. They will probably swallow the water and the toothpaste if you give them water to rinse.

- Use junior strength fluoride toothpaste
- Use a small pea-sized amount of toothpaste
- Young children need an adult to put the toothpaste on the brush and help with brushing until 6 – 7 years old
- Spit do not swallow, and do not rinse after brushing

Fluoride mouthrinses

. . . . for EXTRA protection and great breath.

- for teenagers and adults with a high risk of decay, another way of getting extra fluoride

You still need to brush twice a day with fluoridated toothpaste. Don't use the mouthrinse just after brushing.

Use mouthrinse between brushing times. Swish around mouth thoroughly, then spit out; don't swallow.

Children aged less than 6 years should not use fluoride mouthrinses because they are likely to swallow it rather than spit it out.

**Fluoride supplements
The current Australian guidelines for fluoride state that fluoride supplements either as drops or tablets to be chewed or swallowed should not be used.**

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