

Fluoride and Cavity Prevention

It is known that fluoride can strengthen teeth and prevent cavities. Because of this fluoride is often added to community drinking water, toothpaste and mouth rinse. It can also be taken as prescription drops or tablets to swallow, as well as applied directly to the teeth by a health professional.

In 2014, The American Dental Association and the American Academy of Pediatrics both made a new recommendation on how to provide fluoride to children. It is now recommended that starting from the eruption of the first tooth; children have their teeth brushed with fluoridated toothpaste.

HPA is now recommending the following:

- From first tooth eruption to age 3 years – twice daily brushing using a rice grain-sized amount of fluoridated toothpaste
- From age 3 to 6 years - twice daily brushing using a pea size amount of fluoridated toothpaste

Young children should not be given water to rinse after brushing because their instinct is to swallow. Spitting without rinsing will reduce the amount of fluoride swallowed and leave some fluoride in the saliva where it can help the teeth. If they swallow the toothpaste, the amount of fluoride swallowed will be no higher than the amount gotten from a prescription fluoride supplement.

The amount of fluoride in toothpaste is standardized, so any brand can be used.

Some children benefit from receiving a dietary fluoride supplement. Your child's dentist may choose to prescribe one of these supplements.