

FLUORIDE & YOUR COMMUNITY'S ORAL HEALTH



What is Fluoride?

Fluoride is a natural mineral found in water, soil, plants, and many foods. It strengthens tooth enamel and helps repair early signs of tooth decay. Fluoride protects teeth in two ways:

- **Strengthens developing teeth** when consumed in drinking water.
- **Protects and repairs tooth enamel** when used on the surface of teeth through toothpaste or dental treatments.



Why Fluoride Matters

Tooth decay is one of the most common chronic diseases in children and affects people of all ages. Fluoride is a simple, effective way to prevent cavities.

Research shows that children living in communities with fluoridated water have far fewer cavities. One large review found **about 35 percent fewer decayed, missing, or filled baby teeth among children who drink fluoridated water compared to those who do not.**

Safety and Recommended Levels

Community water systems follow the U.S. Public Health Service recommendation of about 0.7 mg per liter. This level protects teeth while minimizing the chance of dental fluorosis, which appears as very faint white spots on teeth and is usually mild.

Severe fluorosis is rare in the United States. Most people are far below the tolerable upper intake level of 10 mg per day for ages 14 and older.

Fluoride varnish is a safe option for children and has been shown to **reduce tooth decay by about 37 to 43 percent**, especially when applied two or more times per year.

Helpful Resources



SD DOH Oral
Health Information



CDC Community
Water Fluoridation



Check your water
system's fluoride levels

Fluoride in South Dakota

Many public water systems in South Dakota contain fluoride at levels that support good oral health. Families who use private wells or bottled water may need to check fluoride levels and talk with a dentist about supplements or topical treatments.

The SD Department of Health recommends:

- Brushing twice a day with fluoride toothpaste
- Regular dental check-ups
- Checking your water source for appropriate fluoride levels
- Asking your dentist about fluoride varnish, especially for children

How the SD DOH Supports Communities

The South Dakota Department of Health partners with water systems, dentists, schools, and public health nurses to help maintain safe fluoride levels and expand access to preventive oral health services. Public Health Nurses play a key role by applying fluoride varnish in schools, public health offices, and community settings.

Key Takeaways for Families & Policymakers

- Fluoride is safe and effective when used at recommended levels.
- It reduces dental disease, which lowers health care costs for families and communities.
- Communities with fluoridated water see stronger oral health outcomes.
- Good oral health habits and regular dental visits work best when fluoride is part of the plan.