

Talking to your patients about community water fluoridation

A conversation guide for dental and medical providers

Drinking water with fluoride adds a layer of protection against tooth decay, and the CDC says it complements the fluoride in toothpaste. Unfortunately, many of your patients are unaware of the benefits. Dental and medical professionals top the list of trusted sources of health information. Brief conversations with your patients can raise their awareness and educate them about the importance of fluoridated water for everyone in the community.



Conversation Starters

While it may be tempting to debunk some of the negative myths about fluoride, research shows that focusing on the benefits of drinking water with fluoride is a better place to start. Here are some great benefits of fluoridated water:



Nature's cavity fighter!

"Fluoride is a mineral that naturally exists in lakes, rivers, groundwater, and even in the oceans. Water with the right amount of fluoride strengthens the enamel of your teeth and helps reduce your chances of getting a cavity."



Low-cost prevention:

"Drinking water with fluoride provides a way for families to boost their oral health (and overall health) for just a few cents a year!"



Extra layer of protection:

"Water with fluoride gives teeth an extra layer of protection in addition to using fluoride toothpaste, much like air bags and seat belts work together to protect people in cars in two different ways."



Backed by science:

"Over 100 leading health and medical organizations recommend community water fluoridation as safe and beneficial, including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the American Academy of Pediatrics, and the American Dental Association."

Frequently Asked Questions

While most patients take fluoridated water for granted, some may come to an appointment with questions. Here are some common patient questions and examples of how you can approach these conversations:

Q. Why do teeth need fluoride?

A. Acid produced inside our mouths when we eat and drink and can wear away the outer shell of our teeth. Fluoride protects teeth in two ways. Fluoride applied to the surface of teeth makes teeth more resistant to decay. In childhood, fluoride in water protects teeth in a different way—from within. It's a critical part of tooth formation for kids under 8.

Q. My kids brush with fluoride toothpaste. Why do I need to make sure their water has fluoride, too?

A. Brushing with fluoridated toothpaste twice a day is an excellent first step to preventing tooth decay. Drinking fluoridated water adds a layer of protection against tooth decay, because teeth are bathed in small amounts of fluoride throughout the day. Studies conducted after widespread fluoride toothpaste use show that communities with fluoridated water have 20 to 40 percent less tooth decay than communities without access to water with fluoride.

Q. Does bottled water contain fluoride?

A. The majority of bottled waters on the market do not contain the optimal levels of fluoride. Drinking only bottled water could increase a person's risk of tooth decay.

Q. Is drinking water with fluoride healthy?

A. Community water fluoridation is the single-most effective and safe public health measure to prevent tooth decay. Drinking water with fluoride is an important part of a healthy lifestyle because it helps prevent tooth decay throughout your life.

For more information, visit www.fluorideforsmiles.org