



News release

For immediate release:

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Fluoride helps protect your teeth.

Fluoride is a natural mineral that helps protect teeth and bones. It is found naturally in water, rocks, plants, and soil. Some foods also have small amounts of natural fluoride. The amount of fluoride that is found naturally in water is different for each community.

Do you need fluoride?

Most people in Utah live in an area where there **isn't** enough natural fluoride in the water to protect their teeth. Fluoride is important to keep your teeth strong and healthy. But like many things related to health, there's a balance. Too little fluoride can increase the risk of cavities. Too much can cause spots and streaks on your teeth. It's important **to talk with a dentist, doctor, or pharmacist about how to best protect your teeth.** You may need to add fluoride through supplements (pills or drops), varnish, toothpaste, or mouth rinse.

Your body needs some fluoride for healthy teeth, but not too much. Everyone's situation is different. The amount that's right for you depends on your age, your overall health, the amount of fluoride in your drinking water, and your dental history and needs.

How does fluoride work?

Teeth are covered in a hard, outer coating called enamel. Enamel helps protect your teeth from cavities. Bacteria called dental plaque build up on your teeth. The bacteria produce acids that can harm the enamel on your teeth and cause cavities. Fluoride strengthens tooth enamel and prevents tooth decay, keeps the bones around your teeth strong and healthy, reverses early signs of cavities, and protects teeth across **all ages**, especially during childhood when permanent teeth form. Fluoride helps rebuild (remineralize) weakened tooth enamel. Fluoride helps baby teeth form strong enamel, even before teeth break through the gums (erupt).

Should you use fluoride toothpaste?

All toothpaste helps remove plaque or bacteria from your teeth. Plaque is what causes cavities, gum disease, and tooth decay. Toothpaste with fluoride helps remove plaque **and** makes tooth enamel stronger. Most toothpaste sold in the U.S. has fluoride in it. Start to brush your baby's teeth as soon as they break through the gums. For **children younger than 3**, use a tiny amount of fluoride toothpaste to brush their teeth—about the **size of a grain of rice**. For **children 3 to 6 years of age**, use a small amount of fluoride toothpaste—about the size of a **pea**. Help your child brush their teeth 2 times a day, in the morning and before bed.

Do you need a fluoride varnish?

A dentist or doctor may apply fluoride varnish directly on your teeth (called a topical fluoride application). Children ages 6 months and older should have fluoride varnish applied to their teeth 2 to 4 times a year. Fluoride varnish is a quick, painless, and effective way to help prevent cavities in children and adults.

Do you need a fluoride supplement?

Fluoride supplements (also called dietary fluoride supplements) help prevent tooth decay. They come in pills, tablets, drops, or lozenges. You **must have a prescription** for fluoride supplements. Children who take fluoride supplements will take them every day.

Most people in Utah live in an area where there **isn't** enough natural fluoride in the water to protect their teeth. Parents of children ages 6 months to 16 years who live in areas with less than 0.6 milligrams per liter (mg/L) of fluoride in the water should talk to a dentist,

healthcare provider, or pharmacist to help them decide if their child should take a fluoride supplement. Adults may need fluoride supplements if they are at high risk of tooth decay or have certain bone diseases.

How do you know how much natural fluoride is in your drinking water?

Call your local water district or city to ask about the natural fluoride levels in your drinking water. Local water districts are the best and most accurate source of data on fluoride levels in your drinking water. Healthcare providers need this information so they can tell you what fluoride supplements will work best.

Visit the Utah Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) [drinking water system webpage](#) to see which local water district serves your house.

- Enter your street address and ZIP code.
- Click the “Submit” button.
- A report will be shown that lists the name and contact information for your water district. These reports are only available for public water sources.

What if you have a private well?

You can have your well water tested by a private company or certified lab for natural fluoride.

How do I learn more about fluoride?

To learn more about fluoride, visit the Utah Oral Health Program’s website by going to <https://ruralhealth.utah.gov/oral-health-program/fluoride-in-utah/>. You can find a dentist in your area by going to <https://ruralhealth.utah.gov/find-a-dentist-new/>.



LinkedIn blurb:

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