



Fluoride in your water

Fluoride has profoundly reduced the incidence of dental decay since the 1950's and 60's, when fluoride toothpaste, mouth rinse, varnish and foam were developed and it was added to city water in many communities. In fact, public water fluoridation has been listed by the US Centers for Disease Control as one of the 20th century's top 10 public health achievements. In children and adults, daily exposure to topical fluoride (from your water, toothpaste, mouth rinse, gels, etc.) prevents harmful oral bacteria from producing the acid that "eats away" tooth enamel, and re-mineralizes the scarred surface where past damage has been done. Fluoride can also be built into developing permanent teeth during childhood. Ingested fluoride (from water and supplemental tablets or drops) enters a child's bloodstream and is carried to the "bricklayer" cells that are building an adult tooth. These cells insert the fluoride throughout the enamel and dentin as it is formed. When the tooth enters the mouth, it has a built-in defense against bacterial decay.

The levels of fluoride during the period of tooth development should be as closely controlled as possible because too much fluoride will cause the enamel to have chalky white spots, and in severe cases, brown spots (which are permanent on adult teeth). Public water supplies have fluoride added at an optimal level so that children do not need any supplements. Private wells, however, have only naturally occurring fluoride, which in our area is at levels below the proper dosage. Therefore, we recommend that you have your water tested and give your child supplemental fluoride (drops or tablets) depending on the amount of fluoride in your well water.

If you have a **private well**, you can get your water tested at local water testing labs. Call them for information about how to submit water samples:

- Phoenix Environmental Labs Manchester (860) 645-1102
- Uconn Health Center Farmington (860) 679-2805

To receive a water test kit from Uconn, send a check for \$20 to:

The Fluoride Service
Pediatric Dentistry, MC 1610
Uconn Health Center
263 Farmington Ave.
Farmington, CT 06030-1610

Bring the results to us or your pediatrician so that the appropriate dosage of supplemental fluoride may be prescribed for your child.