Fluoride: Tap Into It

Drinking fluoridated water is a great and easy way to fight tooth decay and decrease cavities. In fact, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has recognized water fluoridation as one of 10 great public health achievements of the 20th century.[1]

Fluoride is a mineral that exists naturally in many water sources, but levels can vary from place to place. Water is "fluoridated" when a community adjusts the amount of fluoride in its water system to a level that is found to prevent tooth decay.

Fluoride protects teeth. While you're eating, the bacteria inside your mouth help break down the sugars in food. As the bacteria work, they also produce acids which can attack the enamel of your teeth. This leads to decay. Fluoride helps create a shield and keeps these acids from damaging your pearly whites.

Teeth can also repair themselves thanks to fluoride. When teeth are damaged by the acids created in the mouth, fluoride steps in and helps the tooth enamel regain the minerals it has lost.

Did you know?

Grand Rapids, Michigan, was the first U.S. city to use fluoride in its community water.[2]

Quick bites

Fluoride facts to keep your teeth healthy:

- Brush with fluoride toothpaste twice a day.
- Drink tap water instead of bottled water, as tap water is more likely to contain fluoride.
- Contact your local health department to find out if your community's water is fluoridated.
- Fluoride treatments are easy and painless and can be done by your dentist. They create a shield on teeth to stop the acids created by food and drinks from damaging them.
- Fluoride helps fight tooth decay and cavities by strengthening tooth enamel, which is the hardest part of the body.
- Water isn't the only source where fluoride is found. It can also be found in meat, fish, eggs and tea leaves.

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1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Water Fluoridation Basics," web. **2.** National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research, "The Story of Fluoridation," web.

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