

# Fluoride

## What it is, and Why it Matters for Individual and Community Health

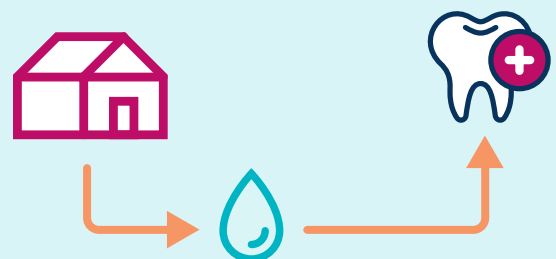
Fluoride is a naturally occurring mineral found in air, water, soil, plants, and many foods. Consumed at safe levels, fluoride is good for you like many other naturally occurring minerals—from calcium (found in leafy greens) to halite (also known as table salt).

More than 75 years of research and experience show that 0.7-1.2 milligrams of fluoride per liter of water strengthens teeth, helps to prevent cavities, and decreases costly visits to the dentist. Water fluoridation within the specified levels is safe according to expert groups including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the American Academy of Pediatrics, and the American Dental Association. To achieve this “optimal level” of fluoride, state and local governments may add to the naturally occurring level of fluoride in water systems—a process known as fluoridation. Fluoridated public water systems undergo routine measurement and monitoring of the fluoride level to ensure it remains within a safe range.

Safe levels of fluoridation make a big difference in individual and community health outcomes. **On the next page are three proven benefits of fluoride and additional ways to maintain your oral health.**



Community water fluoridation is determined at the state and local levels. You may be able to check your community’s public water fluoride levels using the [CDC’s “My Water’s Fluoride” tool](#). Whether or not your community is included in this tool, you can learn more about your public water system’s fluoride levels by contacting your local water provider or visiting their website.



# Three Benefits of Drinking Fluoridated Water

## 1 Fluoride keeps teeth strong.

Drinking fluoridated water exposes your teeth to a consistent, low level of fluoride throughout the day. This protects your teeth from decay. In the long term, drinking fluoridated water leads to fewer cavities, tooth fillings, and pulled teeth.

Since 1962, adding fluoride to public water systems has improved Americans' dental health by reducing cavities in children and adults by about 25%. (Source: [CDC](#))

## 2 Fluoride prevents expensive dental treatments.

One tooth can develop multiple cavities, and each cavity can cost hundreds of dollars to treat. Left untreated, cavities can lead to more serious conditions. When communities have access to the benefits of fluoridated water, people are less likely to leave the dentist's office with a costly bill.

Communities that can access fluoridated water save an average of \$32 per person per year by avoiding expensive dental treatments. (Source: [CDC](#))

## 3 Fluoride is an accessible form of preventative health care.

Unlike over-the-counter and prescription products that help prevent tooth decay, fluoridated water is automatically accessible to the whole community. This benefit is particularly important for people with limited access to dental care and dental treatments.

Before water fluoridation began in 1945, children had about three times as many cavities as they do today. (Source: [North Dakota Health & Human Services](#))

## Maintaining Your Oral Health

About 73% of community water systems in the United States fluoridate their water. Drinking fluoridated water is most effective at maintaining oral health when combined with regular use of fluoridated toothpaste and supplements. Whether or not your community's water is fluoridated, there are several ways to access fluoride and protect your oral health. Talk to a healthcare provider about using fluoridated products, and schedule regular dental check-ups and cleanings to strengthen your teeth and overall health.

## Additional Resources About Fluoride

For more information about fluoride, visit these resources:

- [About Community Water Fluoridation | CDC](#)
- [Community Water Fluoridation Mythbusters | NACCHO](#)

