Fluoride is a critical tool in strengthening children's dental health



CAMP HILL, Pa. (Jan. 29, 2026) — Fluoride is an important tool in fighting one of the most common chronic diseases facing children: tooth decay. For National Children's Dental Health Month in February, United Concordia Dental is emphasizing this natural mineral's role in strengthening young teeth and preventing cavities.

While progress is being made, tooth decay still presents a significant health risk to school-aged children. The 2024 Oral Health Surveillance Report issued by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that cavities were present in the primary or permanent teeth of about 50% of those aged 6–9, compared to about 11% of children aged 2–5 years.

"Fluoride strengthens the outer layer of the teeth's enamel and helps repair any initial damage, making it critical for cavity prevention in early childhood when newly developed teeth can use that extra protection," said Roosevelt Allen, DDS, MAGD, ABGD, chief dental officer, United Concordia Dental. "The earlier parents start integrating recommended amounts of fluoride as part of their children's oral health habits, the more positive an impact it will have on their total health later on."

Best fluoride sources
The easiest ways to integrate this natural mineral into a day-to-day routine is brushing with fluoride toothpaste and drinking fluoride-adjusted water. Other applications include over-the-counter rinses, dentist-administered treatments like gels or varnishes, and prescription supplements. Small amounts of fluoride also occur naturally in some foods and water.

When to begin using fluoride
After the first tooth appears, the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry recommends that parents use no more than a tiny smear of fluoride toothpaste about the size of a grain of rice on a baby brush twice daily. Once children are 3–6 years old, the amount should be increased to a pea-size dollop on an age-appropriate toothbrush. Any excess toothpaste should be spit out after brushing.

Fluorosis risks
For children under the age of eight, ingesting too much fluoride over a long period of time can lead to dental fluorosis, a cosmetic condition that causes a superficial change to the enamel when teeth are still developing under the gums. It can cause white lines or flecks in mild cases, while more moderate to severe ones experience white spots, patches, brown stains or pitting.

"While it has many benefits, we encourage parents to consult with their child's dentist to determine a personalized treatment plan with the amount of fluoride that's right for them," said Dr. Allen.

For more on fluoridation, visit the American Dental Association's FAQ. Other oral health and wellness resources can be found at UnitedConcordia.com. Sign up to get the latest company news.

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