



## **ACTS** to share with patients who ask about **fluoride use in children.**

Some patients may have questions about the use of fluoride for oral care in children. As there are myths online that can be confusing to parents, here are a sample of questions you may hear with fact-based responses to empower your patients' choices.

**Q:** Why do you recommend a toothpaste or mouthwash containing fluoride for children?



**FACT:** Fluoride plays a critical role in strengthening the ability of our teeth to fight off the effects of decay.

Fluoride in toothpaste has the highest possible grade of evidence and support from almost all reliable health organisations across the world, including the World Health Organisation (WHO).

A recent systematic review by the established Cochrane organisation showed that fluoride containing toothpastes reduce the development of tooth decay by 24%.<sup>1</sup>

**Q:** I read online that fluoride is toxic and poisonous. Do you think fluoride is safe for kids?



**FACT:** The safety of fluoride is emphasised by dental and medical associations world-wide, including the World Health Organisation (WHO).

Dental and medical organisations around the world such as the Centers for Disease Control, the New Zealand Dental Association strongly back its use.

Fluoride toothpaste is not intended to be ingested. As young children are inclined to swallow toothpaste when cleaning their teeth, it is recommended that the brushing of children below six years of age should be supervised by adults.

**Q:** I am concerned about my child being overexposed to fluoride. Will it cause fluorosis or staining?



**FACT:** The small amount of fluoride that children would ingest during brushing with a fluoride toothpaste should not lead to fluorosis.

Most fluorosis cases are preventable. Fluoride is safe when used as directed and has major benefits for your child's dental health.

Remind children to not swallow toothpaste while brushing and children aged less than 6 years should not use fluoride mouth rinses.

For more information about the use of fluorides in New Zealand please visit:

<https://www.health.govt.nz/system/files/documents/publications/guidelines-for-the-use-of-fluoride-nov09.pdf>

**Q:** What does fluoride do to the teeth to protect against cavities? I would rather reduce sugar in my child's diet to prevent cavities.



**FACT:** Fluoride is added to toothpastes because it has been found to be beneficial in strengthening tooth surfaces and preventing dental cavities.

Sugars are in almost everything children eat – not just snacks and drinks, but also in a balanced diet of fruits and vegetables.

When we eat sugar, the bacteria living on our teeth use this sugar to grow and multiply. A thick layer of bacteria (plaque) forms on the tooth surface and produces acids that attack our teeth and cause cavities.

Fluoride strengthens the tooth and repairs the damage caused by sugar acid attacks, reverses early decay and prevents further cavities. Fluoride also supports the saliva's natural ability to repair the tooth in between sugar acid attacks.

For more information about fluoride toothpastes, please visit:

[acffglobal.org/for-professionals/reference-materials/fluoride-toothpaste/](http://acffglobal.org/for-professionals/reference-materials/fluoride-toothpaste/)

**Q:** Can you recommend me a natural, chemical-free alternative for my child?



**FACT:** Fluoride is a natural mineral found in food, plants, air and water.

Fluoride-based oral care products are the gold standard for preventing cavities in children and adults. Fluoridated toothpaste and mouthrinses help strengthen our teeth against tooth decay.

Fluoride containing toothpaste is more effective in preventing tooth decay than non-fluoride toothpaste

For more information about the use of fluoride in oral care, please see the following:

Ministry of Health:

<https://www.health.govt.nz/system/files/documents/publications/guidelines-for-the-use-of-fluoride-nov09.pdf>

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