

Fluoride, Checkups and Healthy Eating

For a Lifetime of Good Dental Health

Fluoride

- A mineral that helps strengthen tooth enamel — and repair damaged enamel.
- Helps enhance tooth strength with the body's own minerals, such as calcium.
- Protects teeth from acid attack.
- Inhibits bacteria in plaque from producing acid.
- Children can get fluoride through:
 - Water
 - Fluoride supplements (usually tablets)
 - Professional fluoride treatments
 - Fluoride gels, rinses, toothpastes



Dental Checkups

Ideally, children should visit a dentist:

- Within 6 months of the eruption of their first baby tooth.
- Then twice a year or as recommended by the child's dentist.

At a checkup, the dentist and/or dental hygienist will:

- Examine the child's mouth for early signs of decay or other problems.
- Monitor tooth growth.
- Clean the teeth.
- If necessary, strengthen the teeth with a fluoride treatment.
- Dentists sometimes recommend sealants — clear plastic coatings over the chewing surfaces of back teeth, where decay most often occurs. Sealants shield uneven surfaces from food and plaque.

If children are anxious about going to the dentist, you can ease their fears with a few simple facts:

- Dentists and dental hygienists are friendly people who help to keep teeth healthy.
- Explain what happens at a dental checkup and why.
- Explain the instruments and equipment the dentist might use in the office.
- Explain why dentists and hygienists wear gloves and masks.
- Ask a local dentist or hygienist to visit your class.

Healthy Eating

Snacks – Sugars and starches can contribute to tooth decay. Encourage students to:

- Limit the number of snacks they eat.
- Choose nutritious snacks such as raw vegetables, fruits and low-fat cheese.
- Limit sugary sodas and sports drinks. Note: Snacking or sipping on sugary food or drink over extended periods of time throughout the day can be especially harmful.