



# Hot Topics

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## Too Much Fluoride?

Fluoride has been a tremendous advantage in the fight against cavities for many years. However, the CDC recently warned that an excess of fluoride in children under 8 years of age may result in a condition called enamel fluorosis. Affecting only teeth still under the gums, the condition can be mild to severe, with white flecks, lines, stains or rough surfaces showing on these teeth as they erupt. Fluoride is usually found in tap water, processed drinks, toothpaste and some dietary supplements.

The CDC recommends the following to prevent enamel fluorosis:

- Supervise children, especially those under 6 years of age, when they brush. Be sure they spit excess toothpaste into the sink when finished, and that they use only a small pea-sized amount of toothpaste.
- Use fluoridated toothpaste for children under 2 years of age only when recommended by a doctor or dentist.
- Check your local water supply's fluoride levels at <http://apps.nccd.cdc.gov/MWF/Index.asp>. Below optimal levels are less than 0.7 ppm, optimal levels are 0.7 to 1.2 ppm, and above optimal levels are over 1.2 ppm. If you find your water supply is above optimal (more than 1.2 ppm), you should provide an alternative source of water for your children under 8 years of age.

Enamel fluorosis cannot affect adults or children over 8 years of age. Taking steps to protect younger children from too much fluoride is definitely worthwhile.