

# Factsheet Fluoride

## What is fluoride?

Fluoride is a mineral that is found in rocks and soil, tea, vegetables, grains and water. Small amounts of fluoride are added to drinking water, toothpaste, and mouthwash.

## How does fluoride help the teeth?

Fluoride helps to:

- Make tooth enamel stronger.
- Protect teeth from developing tooth decay.
- Stop tooth decay that has just started to develop from getting worse.

## Fluoride in toothpaste

Children over 18 months and adults are recommended to use fluoride toothpaste when brushing their teeth.

In Australia, toothpaste for children aged 18 months to 6 years has less fluoride. Toothpaste for children older than 6 years and adults has 2-3 times more fluoride than children's toothpaste.

After brushing, spit out the extra toothpaste. Do not wash your mouth with water. This lets the fluoride from the toothpaste sit on the teeth and protect them for longer.

## Why is fluoride added to water?

Fluoride works best when a low level is always present in the mouth. Drinking water that includes fluoride does this!

The amount of fluoride added to drinking water is watched closely to make sure the correct amount is added.

Drinking fluoridated water helps to prevent tooth decay in people of all ages. Research shows it can decrease tooth decay in both children and adults.

