



THE BLOCKLEY PARTNERSHIP  
*Working together for your dental health*

# Fluoride Treatment

Fluoride treatments (eg fluoride mouth rinses, varnishes and gels) help protect teeth against decay and also provide additional protection against acid attacks on the tooth enamel. Fluoride slows down the rate of decay and makes teeth more resistant to acid attack by remineralising them. It also reduces the amount of acid that bacteria can produce.

In the mouth these treatments create low levels of fluoride in saliva, which reduces the rate at which tooth enamel dissolves and increases the rate at which is re-hardens in the early stages of cavities.

Fluoride toothpaste is the most widely used (and rigorously evaluated) fluoride treatment although fluoride mouthwash and varnish are also effective. Fluoride toothpaste reduces cavities by about 25%.

Children who have fluoride when their teeth are developing tend to have shallower grooves in their teeth so plaque can be more easily removed.



A dentist or dental hygienist can apply extra fluoride to the teeth, in the form of gels or varnishes. These are pleasant tasting and are painted onto the tooth surfaces. The patient should have nothing to eat or drink for 60 minutes after application. Professional fluoride application 2 or 3 times a year has been shown to provide additional protection against cavities.

It is very important that fluoride supplements are only taken on the advice of the dentist.

There is a slight risk of 'Dental Fluorosis' if too much fluoride is taken. This appears as very fine pearly white lines or flecking on the surface of the teeth. Severe fluorosis may lead to the enamel being pitted and discoloured. It can happen when children repetitively swallow toothpaste or when too much topical fluoride is applied. Studies carried out for the government by the Medical Research Council have failed to find any evidence that fluoride added to drinking water causes harmful side effects. Fluoride in drinking water has been shown to be very effective in reducing dental decay. In the Tunbridge Wells area there is no added fluoride in the water.

Fluoride drops and tablets are also available to under 12 year olds but advice must be sought from the dentist and these tend to only be used if there is a very high risk of decay. Fluoride gels and mouthwashes can also help prevent root decay which can be a problem especially in people with dry mouths, on certain medications and in the elderly.



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