

SAVE THE FANGS

TALKING WITH PATIENTS ABOUT FLUORIDE.

Spokane faces real oral health challenges, starting with higher cavity rates than many other Washington communities. Severe cavities make it difficult for children to sleep, eat, talk and learn. Oral health affects overall health: Mouth infections and disease are linked to conditions such as diabetes, heart disease, stroke, and pregnancy complications.

Talking with patients about the benefits of fluoride to their health and in our community is a simple way to help solve those problems.



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THE BASICS

Q. What is fluoride?

A. Fluoride is nature's cavity fighter, a mineral found in most water: lakes, rivers, oceans and aquifers. But it's usually found at levels below what's needed to prevent tooth decay.

Q. What does fluoride do for teeth?

A. Fluoride strengthens tooth enamel – making it more resistant to decay. Fluoride replaces minerals lost to acid-attacks that occur when we eat.

Q. What is fluorosis?

A. Mild dental fluorosis leaves faint white marks on teeth when a person ingests too much fluoride. Severe fluorosis, which is very uncommon in the U.S., may cause brown spots. Fluorosis doesn't cause pain or affect the tooth's health **and it doesn't happen when a good balance of fluoride is provided.**

Q. Is fluoride controversial?

A. In most communities, it's not. About 73% of people in U.S. towns or cities live where fluoride is provided at a good balance. Fluoridation has made major improvements in dental health. But some groups try to distort the science to prevent fluoridation.

Q. What's the benefit of a fluoridated water supply?

A. It's the most efficient and cost-effective way to get a good balance of fluoride to everyone, regardless of their income, age or education. It is a public health standard. When you drink fluoridated water the minerals help prevent decay.

Q. Does Spokane have fluoridated water?

A. No. Spokane is the largest city in the state without fluoridated water, in part because a small but vocal group uses misinformation to dismiss this major public health success story.

Q. In the absence of fluoridated water, how can residents access fluoride?

A. There is no substitute for fluoridated water, but talk with your doctor and dentist about supplements or in-office treatments for yourself and your family. And use fluoride toothpaste.

THE CONVERSATION

DO

- Let patients know that Spokane does not have community water fluoridation.
- Say fluoride is a naturally occurring mineral. It's proven to strengthen teeth, prevent cavities and is essential to good oral health.
- Tell patients specifically how to get the fluoride they need, in the absence of fluoridated water.
- Tell parents this is what you do for your children.
- Say community water fluoridation provides a good balance of fluoride to help prevent cavities.
- Mention that for 75 years fluoride in the water has been improving oral health for everyone, young and old.

DON'T

- Say fluoride is a vitamin, chemical or substance.
- Repeat myths or misinformation about fluoride. Research shows that calling out and correcting myths can reinforce them with patients.