

# SAVE YOUR FANGS

Fluoride protects  
your teeth, which  
helps keep your  
whole body healthy.

And that's the  
opposite of scary.

Questions about fluoride in  
your life and in our community?  
Ask your provider today, or visit  
[smilespokane.org](http://smilespokane.org)



# SAVE YOUR FANGS

Fluoride is a proven and essential mineral that helps prevent tooth decay — and that's the opposite of scary.

[smilespokane.org](http://smilespokane.org)



**SmileSpokane**

# FLUORIDE IS NATURE'S CAVITY FIGHTER



## **Q. Where does fluoride come from?**

**A.** Fluoride is a mineral found in most water — lakes, rivers, oceans. But it's usually found at levels below what's needed to prevent tooth decay. Most people in the U.S. live in communities that provide a good balance of fluoride to prevent cavities.

## **Q. What does fluoride do for teeth?**

**A.** Fluoride makes your tooth enamel harder and more resistant to decay. It replaces minerals lost to acid produced when we eat.

## **Q. What does research say about fluoride and health?**

**A.** After decades of research, scientists recommend fluoridation as an effective way to improve oral health. Scientists have found no evidence linking it with any unwanted effect other than fluorosis — faint white spots on kids' teeth when they ingest too much fluoride.

## **Q. Why do some people oppose fluoridated water?**

**A.** About 74% of people in the U.S. live in places where the fluoride is adjusted to optimal levels. Fluoridation has made major improvements in dental health in those places. 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 the right amount of fluoride to everyone, regardless of their income, age or education. Fluoridated water keeps a low level of the mineral in your mouth all day, which works best to prevent decay.

## **Q. Does Spokane have fluoridated water?**

**A.** No. Voters have rejected fluoridation several times, most recently in 2000.

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

**A.** Talk with your doctor and dentist about fluoride supplements and in-office treatments for yourself and your children. And use fluoride toothpaste.

# SAVE YOUR 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.

**HERE'S A SIMPLE WAY TO HELP SOLVE THOSE PROBLEMS.** Talk with patients about the benefits of fluoride to their health and in our community.



[smilespokane.org](http://smilespokane.org)



# THE BASICS

## Q. What is fluoride?

A. Fluoride is nature's cavity fighter, a mineral found in most water — lakes, rivers and oceans. 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 the acid attacks that happen when we eat.

## Q. What is fluorosis?

A. This condition leaves faint white marks on teeth when a person ingests too much fluoride. It doesn't cause pain or affect the tooth's health. Medical experts believe fluorosis usually occurs when young kids eat too much toothpaste when they brush their teeth — not by fluoridated water.

## Q. Why do some people oppose fluoridated water?

A. About 74% of people in the U.S. live in communities where the water is adjusted to levels that work best for oral health. Fluoridation has improved dental health in those places for people of all ages, as demonstrated by decades of research. But some people use misinformation online and elsewhere to distort the science in an effort to reverse this public health success.

## 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 income, age or education. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the American Dental Association, the U.S. Surgeon General, and the American Academy of Pediatrics support fluoridation. Health experts and researchers overwhelmingly conclude that drinking water with fluoride is essential to good oral health.

## Q. Does Spokane have fluoridated water?

A. No. Spokane is the largest city in the state without fluoridated water, in part because a small group has fought for years against it, spreading misinformation during public votes on fluoridation (most recently in 2000). It's also easy to find misinformation about fluoride online. That's one reason it's important for health care providers to provide accurate information to patients.

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

A. There's no substitute for fluoridated water. However, in its absence, doctors and dentists should talk with patients about the benefits of fluoride supplements and in-office fluoride treatments. Providers also should encourage patients to use toothpaste with fluoride.

# THE CONVERSATION

## DO

- Say fluoride is a naturally occurring mineral. It's proven to strengthen teeth and prevent cavities and is essential to good oral health.
- Tell patients specifically how they can get fluoride for themselves and for their children, in the absence of fluoridated water.
- Say community water fluoridation provides a good balance of fluoride help prevent cavities.

## 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.



**Hello!**

Smile Spokane’s goal is to improve oral health in our region — and, as a result, to help improve residents’ overall health. We’re a network of medical, dental, social services and community organizations working to save people’s teeth.

The enclosed resources, created for you and other providers, will help you educate patients about the role of fluoride in protecting their teeth against decay.

Fluoride is nature’s cavity fighter, with fluoridation of drinking water named one of the 10 great public health achievements of the 20th century by the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention. But Spokane doesn’t adjust fluoride levels in our water supply to benefit residents’ oral health. As a result, significant health disparities exist in our community.

Smile Spokane believes water fluoridation would be the most efficient and equitable way to address our community’s oral health problem. Patients need objective, credible information about this proven and essential mineral — so they can make informed decisions about its use, both as individuals and as part of a wider community dialogue.

Here’s where we urge you to join the conversation, simply by talking with your patients about fluoride. We know patients trust their doctors and dentists to provide credible information about their health.

- **DISPLAY THE “SAVE YOUR FANGS!” POSTER** to spark questions and conversation.
- **MAKE THE FLYERS AVAILABLE** in your office or give them directly to patients.
- **USE THE FAQ SHEET** and “dos and don’ts” tips to help inform your conversations.
- **HAND OUT THE MONSTER STICKERS!**

To learn more about Smile Spokane’s work, please visit **SMILESPOKANE.ORG**. Thank you for promoting oral health — and overall health — in our community.

*Signature*

**Chuck Teegarden**  
*Executive Director,  
Communities in Schools  
CO-Chair, Smile Spokane*

*Signature*

**Heather Gallagher**  
*Care Coordinator  
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smilespokane.org

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Sincerely,

**Chuck Teegarden**

*Executive Director,  
Communities in Schools  
CO-Chair, Smile Spokane*

**Heather Gallagher**

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