

## Altus AFB Water Quality Fluoride Levels

The 97th Medical Group Bioenvironmental Engineering Flight routinely inspects water quality for the residents of Altus Air Force Base. Recently, it was noted that the fluoride levels were lower than the recommended daily intake by the American Dental Association. Below are answers to frequently asked questions about fluoride.

Q: What is fluoride, and why is it important for me and my family?

A: Fluoride is nature's cavity fighter that occurs naturally in certain food and water sources. Fluoride protects teeth and helps reverse early signs of decay. Altus tap water, like many U.S. city water sources, does not contain an adequate amount of fluoride to protect teeth from cavities.

Q: How can I make sure I am getting enough fluoride?

A: There are many sources where fluoride can be obtained. Fluoridated city water, fluoridated bottled water, toothpastes, and mouthwashes are the most common. Your dentist or pediatrician may also recommend a topical fluoride treatment during well child or dental visits.

Q: Is fluoridated water safe for my children?

A: Fluoride is safe for all ages; however, the optimal amount can vary by age. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), American Dental Association (ADA) and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention all agree that fluoridated water is a safe and effective way to prevent cavities.

Q: I have heard fluoride is unsafe for babies. Should I mix infant formula with fluoridated water?

A: According to the AAP and ADA, it is safe to use fluoridated water to mix infant formula.

Q: When should my child start using fluoride toothpaste?

A: The AAP and ADA recommend using a "smear" (size of a grain of rice) of toothpaste on children once the first tooth appears until three years of age. After the 3rd birthday, a pea-sized amount can be used. Parents should dispense toothpaste for young children and supervise and assist with brushing. Encourage your child to spit out the toothpaste after brushing.

Q: What happens if I get too much fluoride?

A: Too much fluoride causes a condition called fluorosis. Fluorosis affects the enamel of the teeth and causes them to become mottled and discolored. It occurs when younger children consume too much fluoride over long periods when teeth are developing. Most often these changes are only recognized by your dentist. Once adult teeth come in, (usually around eight), the risk of developing fluorosis is over.

For questions or to set up an appointment in Family Health or the Dental Clinic, please call the 97th MDG appointment line at 580-481-5235.