Fluoridation: The Foundation of Cavity Prevention

The Importance of Prevention

- Tooth decay remains the most common chronic childhood disease in America.
- In New York State, one in four third graders has untreated decay.¹
- By age 15, approximately 60% of all adolescents will have experienced tooth decay.²
- According to a recent report from the CDC, less than half of children through age 21 used dental care in the past year.³
- Tooth decay is a persistent and progressive disease. If it is not prevented, it must be treated or it can threaten a person's overall health.
- More than sixty-five years of research and experience have shown that prevention is the best way to avoid the pain, cost and other negative impacts of tooth decay. One effective, cost-effective, natural and safe way to prevent tooth decay is using fluoride.

How Fluoride Works

Fluoride works by being absorbed onto the surface of a tooth, where demineralization (the formation of tooth decay) has taken place. The fluoride remineralizes tooth surfaces (replaces lost minerals), actually reversing the effects of decay. Fluoride also helps to make teeth stronger and more resistant to future decay.

The Science of Fluoride

- Fluoridation, the practice of adjusting the level of naturally occurring fluoride to the optimal level, is the single most effective and least expensive way to reduce decay for both children and adults.
- It has been shown to reduce tooth decay by about 25% over a person's lifetime.⁴
- A 2010 study revealed that low-income children in less fluoridated counties of New York needed 33% more fillings, root canals, and tooth extractions than those in counties where optimally fluoridated water was available.⁵

Endnotes

¹ New York State Department of Health, 2012 NY Oral Health Surveillance Project
³ Griffin, S., PhD, Barker, L.K., MSPH et al, Use of Dental Care and Effective Preventive Services In Preventing Tooth Decay Among Children and Adolescents – Medical Expenditure Panel Survey, United States, 2003-2009, and National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, 2005-2010. September 12, 2014 / 63(02);54-60