

# Which toothpaste should I use?



It can be confusing trying to decide which toothpaste to use. Here is a quick guide to the role that fluoride plays in keeping your teeth healthy and the different types of toothpaste available.

## There are different types of fluoride in toothpaste

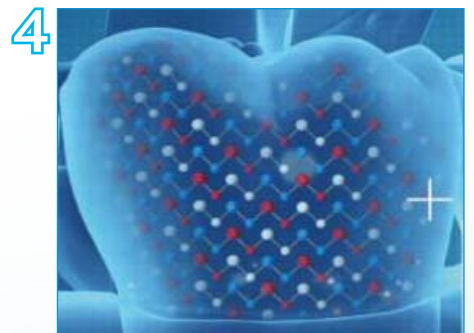
Brushing with fluoride toothpaste can help achieve good oral health and prevent tooth decay. However, not all fluoride toothpastes have the same ingredients and they can vary in the amount of protection that they provide.

The protective properties of toothpastes vary depending on the type of fluoride that they contain. Different types of fluoride include sodium fluoride and sodium monofluorophosphate, which are most commonly used, and amine fluoride and stannous fluoride, which are less common.

Not all toothpastes containing the same type or level of fluoride will be equal with respect to fluoride delivery. This is because there are also a number of other ingredients within the toothpaste (typically greater than 10) that have an impact on the delivery of the fluoride.

## Did you know?

- 1 Fluoride is a natural element found in the earth's crust and water.
- 2 The benefits of fluoride for oral health were discovered when dentists in the USA observed that people, who drank water containing high natural levels of fluoride, experienced less tooth decay than people who did not drink this water.
- 3 More than 500 million people across the world now use fluoride toothpastes.



The widespread use of fluoride toothpaste has been recognised as the single most important reason for the decline of tooth decay in developed countries.

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## How does fluoride work to protect my teeth?

**Cavity formation:** a cavity starts out as a small weak spot in the enamel surface of a tooth. It is a result of acid attack produced by plaque bacteria. When exposed to further plaque acid, this weak spot can develop into a full cavity.

**Demineralization:** plaque acids play a key role in the cavity process because they remove minerals from the tooth, weakening its structure. This process is called demineralization.

**Remineralization:** fluoride counteracts this effect and actually helps to reverse demineralization by returning lost minerals to the demineralized site. This positive process of returning minerals to the mineral-starved site is called remineralization.

**Fluoride protection:** fluoride can also be incorporated directly into the tooth's enamel layer to increase its strength and resistance to attack from acids produced by bacteria.

## Other types of toothpaste

**Whitening:** contain ingredients that will help to remove stains and prevent new stains from forming.

**Tartar control:** usually have a pyrophosphate or tripolyphosphate as an ingredient. While they do not remove existing tartar, they do help prevent tartar from forming above the gum line.

**Desensitising:** if you have sensitive teeth from gum recession or tooth abrasion, a low-abrasive desensitising toothpaste should be used. One key ingredient, potassium nitrate, desensitises teeth, while another key ingredient, strontium chloride, protects the part of the teeth that is connected to nerves.

## Did you know?

- 1 Toothpaste dates back to the time of the **ancient Egyptians**. They used powdered salt, pepper, mint leaves, and iris flowers to make toothpaste.
- 2 An array of ingredients are used in modern toothpaste formulations – each adding its own unique benefit.
- 3 The benefits of **fluoride** in preventing tooth decay was first discovered in the **early 1930s**.
- 4 The flavours of toothpaste are usually from plants like **spearmint** and **peppermint**. Most toothpastes are sweetened with artificial sweetener.

**Always consult your dentist or dental hygienist if you have special dental condition(s).**