

## **Got Teeth? Fluoride treatments can fight tooth decay**

April 8 2014 - With the recent decision to remove fluoride from the water supply in Saint John, the New Brunswick Dental Society is recommending that patients speak to their dentists about ways to strengthen teeth and make them more resistant to decay.

Dr. Kelly Manning of Saint John notes that "while almost all dental disease is preventable, anyone with a risk of tooth decay can benefit from a fluoride treatment." Individuals with poor oral hygiene or decreased dexterity, such as children; individuals with diseases like Parkinson's and multiple sclerosis, and those with dementia can be at higher risk of tooth decay. This can also include people with reduced salivary flow, individuals with diabetes or those taking medications that cause dry mouth.

In many cases, the dentist may recommend a fluoride treatment where a gel, foam or varnish form is applied to your teeth at the dentist's office. "A high concentration fluoride is applied for two minutes," says Dr. Manning. In other cases, a toothpaste with fluoride will be recommended: "the toothpaste removes the bacteria or plaque that forms on teeth and gums every day and can cause tooth decay; fluoride helps re-mineralize damaged teeth and strengthens tooth enamel."

Children may also require fluoride. Your dentist is able to assess your child's risk of developing tooth decay and can advise you of an appropriate level of fluoride protection. "We need different sources of fluoride throughout our lives to build and keep healthy teeth," says Dr. Manning.

The Canadian Dental Association recommends adults and older children use fluoride toothpaste twice a day to brush teeth. Children under three years of age should have their teeth brushed by an adult. For kids at risk of developing cavities, use only a small amount of toothpaste —about the size of a grain of rice, says Dr. Manning.

April is Oral Health Month and the New Brunswick Dental Society is participating with a public education campaign highlighting the message "Building Better Teeth."

The New Brunswick Dental Society exists to promote professional growth, high ethical standards and quality care giving through communication, education and the regulation of dentistry in New Brunswick.

## Children and cavities

Children at risk of tooth decay may benefit from a fluoride treatment. Here are some risk factors for children who may be at risk of early childhood tooth decay, according to the Canadian Dental Association.

The child:

- Lives in a community that does not have fluoridated water.
- Has a visible defect, notch, cavity or white chalky area on a baby tooth in the front of the mouth.
- Regularly consumes sugar, even natural sugars such as fruit juice, between meals, perhaps in a sippy cup.
- Has special health care needs that make it difficult for mom and dad to brush the teeth
- Brushes less than once a day
- Was born prematurely with a very low birth weight of less than 1500 grams (3 lbs)