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50 years of clinical trials prove fluoride toothpastes work!

Fluoride toothpastes are more effective than non-fluoride toothpastes at reducing cavities, say researchers from the Cochrane Oral Health Group.

The review of more than five decades of clinical trials involving children and adolescents found that regular brushing with fluoridated toothpaste results in 24 percent fewer cavities than brushing with non-fluoridated toothpaste. “In the last 30 years, the incidence of cavities in children’s teeth has declined significantly in many communities—a result of both fluoridation of the water supply and of increased use of fluoridated toothpastes and other topically-applied fluoride treatments,” says joint coordinating editor William Shaw. Adds Dr. Kenneth Burrell, senior director of the ADA Council on Scientific Affairs, *“These results are not surprising; they reinforce what has been our overall impression—after following many studies for many years—of the beneficial effects of fluoride dentifrices.”*

Study results were presented Jan. 11 at the Evidence into Action conference sponsored by the Forsyth Center for Evidence-Based Dentistry. The reviewers assessed 74 studies conducted between 1950 and 2001 in the Americas, Europe and Asia involving more than 42,000 subjects under age sixteen. Additional results, according to a study release:

- Brushing with a fluoride toothpaste at least once a day reduces caries—even if children live in areas with fluoridated water supplies;
- Brushing twice a day with a fluoride toothpaste confers greater caries reduction than brushing once a day or less; and
- Using fluoride toothpaste may confer greater caries benefit in children and adolescents with higher baseline levels of decayed, missing and filled teeth.

“This definitive study reinforces the need for parents to continue to protect their children from tooth decay by using fluoridated toothpaste,” says Dr. Richard Niederman, director of the Forsyth Center.

The researchers did not study the effectiveness of fluoride toothpaste in adults or differences in effectiveness of varying fluoride toothpaste formulations.

The review appears in the January issue of the Cochrane Library, a quarterly electronic collection of evidence-based systematic reviews of data from health care studies prepared by the Cochrane Collaboration.

Article by Mark Berthold of ADA News