FDI DRAFT POLICY STATEMENT

Promoting Oral Health Through Fluoride

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CONTEXT

Despite all the efforts made to date, dental caries which affects children, adults and the elderly, continues to be the most prevalent chronic disease worldwide and constitutes a major global public health challenge¹. It can affect an individual’s ability to speak, smile, smell, taste, touch, chew, swallow and stop a person from conveying a range of emotions through facial expressions with confidence and without pain or discomfort². Dental caries can also potentiate the risk of some systemic diseases. Therefore, maintaining good oral health is critical to securing overall health and well-being².

There are many social determinants of health that lead to oral health inequities, which cause the prevalence and severity of dental caries to be higher in disadvantaged populations³. Dental caries can be prevented, managed or treated in its initial non-cavitated stage, through the adoption of evidence-based measures such as: avoiding unhealthy diets, particularly rich in free sugars content, and implementing good oral hygiene habits, which include regular removal of oral biofilm from tooth surfaces and appropriate use of fluoride toothpaste.

Fluoride ions in low concentrations at the tooth surfaces are essential to slow down or stop demineralization and to enhance remineralization of the tooth tissue⁴,⁵.

SCOPE

There are a number of options to make fluoride available to populations, in a cost-effective way, which can and should be applied according to the country realities and legislation.

Fluoride can be present naturally in drinking water at optimum preventive levels or can be added to water supplies through population-based public health interventions. Water fluoridation is the most efficient, cost-effective, safe and equitable way to prevent and help to reduce carious lesion development at the community level. Fluorides can, alternatively, be added to salt or milk, in the appropriate doses⁴.

At the individual level, the use of fluoride toothpaste, fluoride mouthwashes, fluoride gels and/or fluoride varnishes have proven to be effective in managing, preventing and treating the early stages of dental caries, if used at recommended levels. ⁴,⁵
DEFINITIONS

Fluoride’s role in oral health: The preventive efficacy, cost-effectiveness and safety of fluoride-containing products in reducing the prevalence and onset of dental caries has been proven. It has been clinically shown that the action of using fluoride can also be therapeutic in the treatment of the incipient lesions of caries (non-cavitated). This newly re-discovered characteristic of fluorides, always through topical action, shows the importance of its use in the fight against caries.

PRINCIPLES

FDI urges all countries to recognize that universal access to fluoride for maintaining oral health is part of the basic human right to health.

POLICY

FDI advocates the use of fluoride for management of dental caries, in prevention and/or treatment of early lesions for children, adults and elderly, and calls for the implementation of policies that:

- Ensure population-wide public health measures that allow universal access to affordable fluoride to prevent dental caries and promote oral health.
- Use the most appropriate means to disseminate information on the benefits of fluoride as a preventive agent in health promotion strategies and programmes.
- Disseminate information about the importance of fluoride in the treatment of the non-cavitated carious lesions.
- Encourage governments to reduce or remove taxation and tariffs on fluoride products for oral health.
- Improve capacities of national food and drug administrations for better monitoring quality standards of toothpaste in line with ISO 11609.

KEYWORDS

Dental caries, oral public health, oral health, fluoride

DISCLAIMER

The information in this Policy Statement was based on the best scientific evidence available at the time. It may be interpreted to reflect prevailing cultural sensitivities and socio-economic constraints.

REFERENCES


