



florida dental

A S S O C I A T I O N SM

FACTS ON FLUORIDE

- Fluoride is naturally present in all water. Community water fluoridation is the precise adjustment of fluoride that occurs naturally in a community's water supply to the level recommended for optimal dental health. The U.S. Public Health Service, a division of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, has established the optimal concentration for fluoride in water supplies to be 0.7 parts per million (ppm). At 1 ppm, one part of fluoride is diluted in a million parts of water.
- Throughout 70 years of research and practical experience, the overwhelming weight of credible scientific evidence consistently indicates that fluoridation of community water supplies is the single most effective, safe and cost-effective public health measure to prevent dental decay and repair early tooth decay.
- Studies prove water fluoridation is effective in reducing dental decay by 20-40 percent, even in an era with widespread availability of fluoride from other sources, such as fluoride toothpaste.
- For more than six decades, community water fluoridation has been the cornerstone of tooth decay prevention in the United States. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has recognized water fluoridation as “one of 10 great public health achievements of the 20th century.”
- Community water fluoridation benefits everyone, especially those without access to regular dental care. It is the most efficient way to prevent one of the most common childhood diseases – dental decay (five times as common as asthma and seven times as common as hay fever in 5- to 17-year-olds). Without fluoridation, there would be many more than the estimated 51 million school hours lost per year in this country because of dental-related illness.
- Fluoridation also benefits middle-aged adults with reductions in tooth decay that occurs on tooth enamel surfaces and also on root surfaces that become exposed as gums recede.
- Water fluoridation is an effective strategy in efforts to eliminate health disparities among populations since the benefits of fluoridation are available to the entire community.

- Adjusting community water supplies to optimal fluoride levels is similar to fortifying salt with iodine, milk with vitamin D and orange juice with vitamin C.
- Compared to the cost of dental treatment, community water fluoridation actually provides cost savings. The average lifetime cost per person to fluoridate a water system is less than the cost of one dental filling.
- Communities that invest in water fluoridation save an average of \$32.19 per capita in dental treatment costs.
- The average annual cost for a community to fluoridate its water is estimated to range from approximately \$0.50 a year per person in large communities to approximately \$3.00 per person in small communities.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Fluoridation of Community Water Supplies

1. What is community water fluoridation?

Fluoride is naturally present in all water and is often called “nature’s cavity fighter.” Community water fluoridation is the precise adjustment of fluoride that occurs naturally in a community's water supply to the level recommended for optimal dental health, approximately 0.7 ppm (parts per million).

2. Is community water fluoridation the only way to get the cavity prevention benefits of fluoride?

The benefits of fluoride can be provided in many forms, including fluoride toothpaste, dietary fluoride supplements (tablets, drops and lozenges), professional fluoride treatments (gels and varnish) and optimally fluoridated drinking water. However, community water fluoridation is more cost effective than other forms of fluoride treatments or applications; is accessible to the entire community; provides frequent exposure to small amounts of fluoride over time, making fluoridation effective for both children and adults in helping to prevent tooth decay; and doesn't require a change in behavior to obtain the decay preventing benefits.

3. Doesn't community water fluoridation just benefit children?

No. People of all ages and backgrounds will benefit. As we age, many factors can result in less saliva, a condition known as "dry mouth." The risk of tooth decay increases with dry mouth, particularly on the softer root surfaces. When fluoride is in the mouth, the teeth become much more resistant to decay. Fluoridated water is safe, effective, and the least expensive way to reduce tooth decay in children and adults.

4. Is community water fluoridation cost effective?

Yes. The savings in dental treatment costs to a community by providing water fluoridation are substantial. It has been calculated that the lifetime cost per person of providing fluoridated water in the United States is less than the cost of a single filling. By preventing tooth decay, water fluoridation saves money for communities' families and health care systems. Communities that invest in water fluoridation save an average of \$32.19 per capita in dental treatment costs.

5. Can community water fluoridation cause cancer?

The U.S. National Cancer Institute says very clearly that there is no evidence linking water fluoridation to any form of cancer. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention stated that studies to date have produced "no credible evidence" of an association between fluoridated drinking water and an increased risk for cancer. The American Cancer Society also recognizes the public health benefit of water fluoridation.