



Water Fluoridation Facts

What is fluoride?

Fluoride is found in soil, fresh water, sea water, plants and many foods. Fluoride is a form of fluorine, and one of the most common elements in the earth's crust. Fluoride has positive effects on dental health.

What is water fluoridation?

All water contains some fluoride. Fluoridation is the process of adjusting the natural fluoride level in the water supply to the amount required for protection against tooth decay. For British Columbia, the most effective amount is 0.7mg/L to 1.0mg/L of fluoride in the water supplies. Reliable equipment and careful monitoring help maintain these fluoride levels.

How does fluoride prevent tooth decay?

Fluoride prevents tooth decay in a number of ways. Fluoride protects teeth when they first appear and as they develop over time. Fluoride bonds with the enamel or surface of teeth, making them more resistant to bacteria and decay.

It also helps to repair the earliest stages of tooth decay, visible only under the microscope.

What are the benefits of water fluoridation?

Extensive research done over the past 50 years shows that water fluoridation is a safe, effective and low-cost way to improve dental health for people of all ages.

Studies show that children who drink fluoridated water can expect up to 35 per cent less decay than those who drink non-fluoridated water. By using fluoridated water, children develop strong teeth that last for a lifetime. As adults, they will have fewer cavities or missing teeth. Adults who drink fluoridated water can also expect to have less tooth decay.

Is fluoridation safe?

Yes. The safety of fluoridation of public or community water supplies has been studied thoroughly as a public health measure.

Since the 1940s, hundreds of scientific studies have shown that the use of fluoride for optimal dental health has no harmful effects.

Extensive reviews of fluoridation by leading experts have found no connection between fluoridation and cancer. There has been no evidence that low levels of exposure to fluoride causes problems to other parts of

the body. It has not been associated with birth defects or syndromes.

Fluoride is recommended to prevent tooth decay and to improve dental health. Water fluoridation is endorsed as a valuable and beneficial public health measure by:

- The Canadian Dental Association;
- The Canadian Medical Association;
- The Canadian Public Health Association;
- The Canadian Pediatric Society; and
- The World Health Organization.

Is fluoridation expensive?

No. Fluoridation of a water supply costs 50 to 60 cents per person per year.

Should water supplies be fluoridated?

Water fluoridation plays a key role in dental health.

Some communities have stopped water fluoridation due to unfounded fear about harmful effects. Increased incidence of tooth decay has been found in communities that have stopped the use of fluoridation.

Communities must give careful consideration to this issue because unnecessary harm can result from stopping fluoridation.

For more information on water fluoridation, please contact your dentist or dental hygienist, or the dental program at your local public health unit.

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