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# Community Water Fluoridation

THE #1 WAY  
TO PREVENT  
DENTAL DECAY



THE ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

## What is Community Water Fluoridation?

All drinking water supplies contain some fluoride naturally. Getting the right amount of fluoride is important to prevent tooth decay. Water plant operators continuously monitor the fluoride content of drinking water in communities that fluoridate.

The most favorable concentration for fluoride in drinking water in the United States varies from 0.7 parts-per-million (ppm) in hot climates to 1.2 ppm in cold climates. For moderate climates, 1 ppm is recommended. (One ppm is the same as 1 mg/L.)

Community water  
fluoridation is the  
process of adjusting  
the fluoride content  
that occurs naturally  
in a community's  
water to the best  
level for preventing  
tooth decay.



## What are the Benefits of Community Water Fluoridation?

Hundreds of studies conducted in the United States and other countries during the past 60 years show that community water fluoridation prevents tooth decay. Because fluoride is so successful in preventing decay, it is incorporated into many dental care products, such as toothpastes and mouthrinses. Most people in non-fluoridated communities now receive some protection against cavities from fluoride in these dental care products and in food and beverages processed in fluoridated communities. Although people living in non-fluoridated communities have benefited from these other sources of fluoride, those living in fluoridated communities generally experience 18-40% less tooth decay.

### The measurable benefits of water fluoridation are:

- 18 to 40 percent less dental decay in persons of all ages.
- More children free of dental decay.
- Fewer children having permanent teeth extracted because of decay.
- More adults keeping their teeth for a lifetime.
- Prevention and reversal of early stages of tooth decay in adults.
- Older adults less likely to develop decay on the roots of their teeth.
- Lower dental bills for repairing decayed teeth.
- Less need for procedures that require anesthesia and drilling.

## Why Fluoridate?

It has been demonstrated that fluoride's action in preventing tooth decay provides a benefit to both children and adults throughout their lives.

## Do Adults Benefit from Drinking Fluoridated Water?

It is a popular misconception that fluoridation helps only children. 35% among adults, as well as children, benefit from drinking fluoridated water throughout their lives. Because of water fluoridation, people are enjoying a lifetime of healthier teeth.

## Is Community Water Fluoridation Safe?

Absolutely! The safety of community water fluoridation has been studied more thoroughly than any other public health measure during the past 60 years. Hundreds of clinical, animal, and laboratory studies support its safety.

### Benefits of fluoridation include:

#### Prevents cavities



#### Prevents pain



#### Saves money



## Why is Community Water Fluoridation an ideal Public Health Method?

Community water fluoridation is effective, safe, inexpensive, and practical. The average cost of fluoridation is about .62 cents per person a year. This is one of the best bargains in health today!

The entire community benefits from community water fluoridation, regardless of a person's age, income, level of education, or ability to get dental care. Everyone benefits when they drink fluoridated water and consume foods and beverages prepared with it.

## Who Supports Community Water Fluoridation?

Community water fluoridation has the unqualified approval of every major health organization in the United States and many other countries. The American Dental Association, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the American Medical Association, and the World Health Organization strongly endorse water fluoridation. Many organizations support fluoridation, including the American Association of Public Health Dentistry, American Academy of Pediatrics, American Cancer Society, American Dental Hygienists' Association, American Heart Association, American Public Health Association, and International Association for Dental Research.

## Is the Drinking Water in your Community Fluoridated?

There are several ways to learn if your community maintains optimum levels of fluoride in its drinking water. A telephone call or letter to the utility that provides water for your community is probably the easiest way. You can also ask physicians, dentists, and pharmacists in your community, or check with your local, county or state health departments.

The American Association of Public Health Dentistry urges you to support the adoption or continuation of community water fluoridation for your community. Find out if your community is fluoridated. If it isn't, ask your political leaders and local health officials why not. You have a right to the improved dental health that comes from living in a fluoridated community!

**I**n summary, community water fluoridation is the most efficient way to prevent tooth decay. The following key facts about fluoridation summarize why this is so.

- Fluoridation is the least expensive and most effective way to reduce tooth decay.
- Fluoridation benefits children and adults when they drink fluoridated water and consume foods and beverages prepared with it.
- Fluoridation is safe.
- Fluoridation provides benefits that continue for a lifetime.
- Fluoridation reduces the need for dental treatment and its costs.

