

Community Water Fluoridation Speaking Points

Pediatricians & Health Professionals

Oral health is an integral part of the overall health of children. Dental caries is the most common chronic childhood disease and has significant consequences. As health care professionals responsible for the overall health of children, pediatricians and others caring for children frequently confront morbidity associated with dental caries.

COMMUNITY WATER FLUORIDATION (CWF)

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) supports CWF as an intervention that optimizes the level of fluoride in drinking water, resulting in pre-eruptive and post-eruptive protection of the teeth. Water fluoridation is the most cost-effective means of preventing dental caries and the most effective way to deliver anti-caries benefits to entire communities. The AAP published the policy statement, “[Fluoride Use in Caries Prevention in the Primary Care Setting](#)” in the August 2014 issue of *Pediatrics*.

The AAP manages the [Campaign for Dental Health \(CDH\)](#), a broad network of oral health advocates, health professionals, child and family organizations, and scientists who are working together to preserve our nation’s gains in oral health. The CDH works to advance policies to support national and local CWF campaigns and to assist communities facing defluoridation attempts.

THE DEBATE OVER FLUORIDATED WATER

Many false and misleading claims are made by people who oppose CWF and who have found a powerful tool in the internet to cast doubt on this common sense practice. As a spokesperson for children’s health, you can draw on both your experience with children suffering from early childhood caries and on the facts and resources provided below.

Additional Resources: [CDH—The Debate Over Fluoridated Water](#)

FACTS ABOUT FLUORIDE

Fluoride is a mineral that exists naturally in nearly all water supplies. Research proves irrefutably that, at a certain level in drinking water, fluoride prevents tooth decay. Fluoridation is the adjustment of fluoride that occurs naturally in water to an optimal level to prevent tooth decay.

There is solid, consistent evidence supporting fluoride’s role in cavity prevention. Studies show that community water fluoridation prevents at least 25% of tooth decay in children and adults over the lifespan. Roughly 74% of Americans whose homes are connected to a community water system receive optimally fluoridated water, and people of all ages benefit. After 70 years of widespread fluoridation, more seniors are keeping most or all of their teeth, thanks in part to CWF.

Additional Resources: [CDH—Fluoride Safety: A Guide for Health Professionals](#) ([Spanish](#))

REGULATION OF FLUORIDE ADDITIVES

The quality and safety of fluoride additives are ensured by NSF/ANSI Standard 60, a program commissioned by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and managed by NSF International. Standard 60 is a set of standards created and monitored by an independent committee of health experts. This committee provides regular reports to the EPA. More than 80 percent of fluoride additives are produced by U.S. companies, but no matter where they come from, Standard 60 certification operates worldwide and uses on-site inspections and even surprise “spot checks” and independent analyses to confirm these additives meet quality and safety standards.

Additional Resources: [CDC—Water Fluoridation Additives Fact Sheet](#)

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DENTAL FLUOROSIS

Enamel fluorosis is a cosmetic condition that most commonly produces faint white markings on teeth as they are forming (from birth through age 8) and is the only proven risk factor resulting from over exposure to fluoride. Dental fluorosis results from ingesting high concentrations of the mineral. This condition does not cause pain and does not affect the health or function of the teeth. The majority of fluorosis cases are classified as “very mild” to “mild.” The low risk of teeth forming with mild fluorosis must be weighed against the benefit of less tooth decay.

Additional Resources: [CDH—Fluorosis Facts: A Guide for Health Professionals \(Spanish\)](#); [CDH—Fluorosis Facts: A Guide for Parents and Caregivers \(Spanish\)](#); [ADA Oral Health Topics—Fluorosis](#); [CDC—FAQs for Dental Fluorosis](#)

FLUORIDE AND INFANTS

Fluoridated water can be used to reconstitute infant formula. The issue for parents of infants to consider is the possibility of enamel fluorosis. A 2010 study published in the Journal of the American Dental Association (ADA) found that nearly all cases of dental fluorosis from formula mixed with fluoridated water were mild and concluded that “no general recommendations to avoid use of fluoridated water in reconstituting infant formula are warranted.”

Additional Resources: [HealthyChildren.org—FAQ: Fluoride & Children](#), [CDC—Overview: Infant Formula and Fluorosis](#)

CANCER, IQ AND OTHER PURPORTED HEALTH PROBLEMS

According to the CDC, “For more than 65 years, water fluoridation has undergone extensive scientific studies and reviews to assess its public health benefits and risks. For many years, panels of experts from different health and scientific fields have provided strong evidence that water fluoridation is safe and effective.”

In 2006, a panel of the National Research Council—an arm of the National Academies of Science—found no convincing evidence of a causal link between fluoridation and cancer.

A 2012 Harvard study reviewed data on IQ scores for children living in areas of China, Mongolia, and Iran where the fluoride levels were more than 10 times higher than the optimal level used in the U.S. The study’s authors reached a weak conclusion, writing that “our results support the *possibility* of adverse effects ... on children’s neurodevelopment” and called for more and better-quality research, including more “precise” data on the children involved and greater confidence that other factors be ruled out as reasons for the IQ differences.

Additional Resources: [CDH—Fluoride Myths & Facts](#)

MAJOR HEALTH AND MEDICAL ORGANIZATIONS SUPPORT CWF

See [What Respected Organizations and Experts Say about Water Fluoridation](#) for endorsements from all the major health and medical organizations in the U.S. and abroad.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DISEASE PREVENTION FOR PARENTS AND FAMILIES

Please see [A Guide to Children’s Dental Health](#) at [HealthyChildren.org](#) for more information for parents and families about oral health.