

## Improving oral health in your community: Community Water Fluoridation

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Community water fluoridation is safe, effective and protects children, adults and seniors. Water fluoridation helps prevent oral disease, and we have an obligation to provide this important health measure.

### What is fluoride?

Fluoride is a naturally-occurring mineral that is found in all water sources (lakes, rivers, groundwater and in oceans). Fluoride protects teeth in two ways—systemically and topically. Systemic protection happens when fluoride is ingested by young children as it helps to strengthen their future teeth. Topical protection occurs after the tooth has erupted above the gum. Fluoride keeps tooth enamel strong and solid by preventing the loss of important minerals—stopping or even reversing tooth decay in children, adults and seniors.

### What is community water fluoridation?

Community water fluoridation is the process of adjusting the natural fluoride concentration of fluoride-deficient water to a level recommended for prevention of dental disease, approximately 1 ppm (one part per million). Fluoride levels found in fluoridated water are well within the safe levels issued by the United States Public Health Service and Environmental Protection Agency.

*“Community water fluoridation continues to be the most cost-effective, practical and safe means for reducing and controlling the occurrence of tooth decay in a community.”*

*-U.S. Surgeon General*

### Community water fluoridation is safe and effective.

Fluoridation has been thoroughly researched; it is proven to be safe and effective. More than 60 years of experience has demonstrated that fluoridation causes no adverse health effects. About two-thirds of the country—more than 180 million people—are served by fluoridated water systems, and nearly every large city in the U.S. fluoridates its water supply. In Washington state, only about 62 percent of residents receive optimally fluoridated drinking water.

Virtually every health and medical organization supports community water fluoridation. Fluoridation is strongly supported by the U.S. Surgeon General’s office, American Dental Association, American Medical Association, the National Academy of Sciences, the World Health Organization, and the American Public Health Association. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ranked fluoridation as one of the 10 greatest public health achievements of the last 100 years.

### **Fluoridation reduces pain and suffering caused by oral disease.**

Tooth decay is intensely painful, can impair overall health, interferes with good nutrition and has been linked to other health problems including heart disease and diabetes. Oral disease can strike anyone, but children and seniors are the most vulnerable. Water fluoridation reduces tooth decay by up to 40% and helps people keep their teeth. As teeth become stronger and healthier, they become substantially more resistant to decay, which means less pain, and lower dental bills.

### **Fluoridation benefits everyone in the community.**

Adding fluoride to water—like using seatbelts, or adding vitamin D to milk or iodine to salt—is a simple step that greatly improves the health of the whole community. Children’s developing teeth need fluoride to create strong enamel. Without water fluoridation, many children develop cavities and suffer intense chronic pain, robbing them of the chance to have a normal life. Drinking fluoridated water helps seniors keep their teeth and lessens their need for expensive dental care. Fluoridated water helps everyone by strengthening teeth and improving health.

### **Fluoridation is inexpensive, especially considering the cost of not fluoridating.**

At a cost of 50 cents per person per year, fluoridation can significantly improve the oral health of every resident. The American Dental Association estimates that the lifetime cost per person to fluoridate a water system is less than the cost of one dental filling. For a family, this could easily translate into a savings of hundreds of dollars every year. Fluoridation saves tax dollars. Children living in poverty are at a high risk of developing oral disease, and the cost of treatment is often shifted to the community as a whole. Fluoridation would spare many children from the pain of oral disease, and save hundreds of thousands in tax dollars. It is a prevention measure that saves more money than it costs.

### **The benefits of water fluoridation can help save scarce health care dollars for families, businesses and taxpayers.**

Fluoridation costs next to nothing, and according to the CDC, every \$1 invested in community water fluoridation yields approximately \$38 savings in dental treatment costs.

*To learn more about community water fluoridation, contact:*

#### **Washington Dental Service Foundation**

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Seattle, WA 98175

206.528.2331

[www.DeltaDentalWa.com](http://www.DeltaDentalWa.com)

[www.FluorideWorks.org](http://www.FluorideWorks.org)

## Fluoridation Supporters

Academy of Dentistry International  
Academy of General Dentistry  
Academy for Sports Dentistry  
Alzheimer's Association  
America's Health Insurance Plans  
American Academy of Family Physicians  
American Academy of Nurse Practitioners  
American Academy of Oral and Maxillofacial Pathology  
American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons  
American Academy of Pediatrics  
American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry  
American Academy of Periodontology  
American Academy of Physician Assistants  
American Association for Community Dental Programs  
American Association for Dental Research  
American Association for Health Education  
American Association for the Advancement of Science  
American Association of Endodontists  
American Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons  
American Association of Orthodontists  
American Association of Public Health Dentistry  
American Association of Women Dentists  
American Cancer Society  
American College of Dentists  
American College of Physicians—American Society of Internal Medicine  
American College of Preventive Medicine  
American College of Prosthodontists

American Council on Science and Health  
American Dental Assistants Association  
American Dental Association  
American Dental Education Association  
American Dental Hygienists' Association  
American Dietetic Association  
American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations  
American Hospital Association  
American Legislative Exchange Council  
American Medical Association  
American Nurses Association  
American Osteopathic Association  
American Pharmacists Association  
American Public Health Association  
American School Health Association  
American Society for Clinical Nutrition  
American Society for Nutritional Sciences  
American Student Dental Association  
American Veterinary Medical Association  
American Water Works Association  
Association for Academic Health Centers  
Association of American Medical Colleges  
Association of Clinicians for the Underserved  
Association of Maternal and Child Health Programs  
Association of State and Territorial Dental Directors  
Association of State and Territorial Health Officials  
Association of State and Territorial Public Health Nutrition Directors  
British Fluoridation Society  
Canadian Dental Association  
Canadian Dental Hygienists Association  
Canadian Medical Association  
Canadian Nurses Association  
Canadian Paediatric Society  
Canadian Public Health Association  
Child Welfare League of America  
Children's Dental Health Project  
Chocolate Manufacturers Association

Consumer Federation of America  
Council of State and Territorial  
Epidemiologists  
Delta Dental Plans Association  
FDI World Dental Federation  
Federation of American Hospitals  
Hispanic Dental Association  
Indian Dental Association (U.S.A.)  
Institute of Medicine  
International Association for Dental  
Research  
International Association for  
Orthodontics  
International College of Dentists  
March of Dimes Birth Defects  
Foundation  
National Association of Community  
Health Centers  
National Association of County and City  
Health Officials  
National Association of Dental  
Assistants  
National Association of Local Boards of  
Health  
National Association of Social Workers  
National Confectioners Association  
National Council Against Health Fraud  
National Dental Assistants Association  
National Dental Association  
National Dental Hygienists' Association  
National Down Syndrome Congress  
National Down Syndrome Society  
National Eating Disorders Association  
National Foundation of Dentistry for the  
Handicapped  
National Head Start Association  
National Health Law Program  
National Healthy Mothers, Healthy  
Babies Coalition  
National Kidney Foundation  
Oral Health America  
Robert Wood Johnson Foundation  
Society for Public Health Education  
Society of American Indian Dentists  
Special Care Dentistry

Academy of Dentistry for Persons with  
Disabilities  
American Association of Hospital Dentists  
American Society for Geriatric Dentistry  
The Children's Health Fund  
The Dental Health Foundation (of  
California)  
U.S. Department of Defense  
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs  
U.S. Public Health Service  
Health Resources and Services  
Administration (HRSA)  
Centers for Disease Control and  
Prevention (CDC)  
National Institute of Dental and  
Craniofacial Research (NIDCR)  
World Federation of Orthodontists  
World Health Organization