

Community Water Fluoridation

What is tooth decay?

Tooth decay – or dental caries – occurs when bacteria in the mouth process sugar to produce acid that destroys the tooth structure. Tooth decay can cause pain, infection and tooth loss. It is a very common disease that affects both adults and children and can result in missed school or work and limit social interaction.

What is water fluoridation?

Community water fluoridation is the controlled addition of fluoride in community water systems for the prevention of tooth decay. The optimal level of fluoride for tooth decay prevention is 0.7 milligrams of fluoride per liter of water, which has been demonstrated to be safe for human consumption.

Does water fluoridation work?

YES! Research shows that drinking fluoridated water decreases tooth decay in both the primary and permanent teeth of children. A review by an independent panel of public health experts found that water fluoridation decreased tooth decay in children ages 4-17 by 30-50% and another showed that stopping water fluoridation increased tooth decay by 18%. Because tooth decay is a chronic disease, reducing childhood tooth decay experience may have benefits into adulthood. Water fluoridation may also reduce oral health disparities caused by unequal access to dental services.

What about cost?

Drinking fluoridated water saves money by reducing the need for costly dental services to treat tooth decay and stopping water fluoridation may increase costs.

Is water fluoridation safe?

YES! Optimally fluoridated water prevents tooth decay while minimizing risks for adverse health effects. Numerous scientific reviews have failed to show consistent evidence of adverse health effects from drinking optimally fluoridated water. A recent meta-analysis found no link between fluoride levels up to 1.5 mg/L—including those used in U.S. community water fluoridation—and lower IQ scores in children. AADOOCR supports continuing research to understand the effect of fluoride exposure from all sources and to promote the safe and beneficial delivery of fluoride through drinking water.

For more information, see AADOOCR's Policy Statement on Community Water Fluoridation at <https://www.aadoocr.org/science-policy/community-water-fluoridation-position-statement>.

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Fluoridation of community water systems helps prevent tooth decay



Drinking fluoridated water saves money by reducing the need for costly dental services

