

Fluoridation Facts

- Fluoride occurs naturally at some level in all water supplies as it is the 13th most common element on earth.
- In most of metropolitan Australia, naturally sourced fluoride is added to the public water supply to help strengthen teeth and prevent decay. The amount is tiny and is not harmful to health.
- The World Health Organisation and other health authorities recognise that water fluoridation is the safest, most effective and equitable way of improving oral health in the whole population.
- Recent independent surveys of the NSW population show up to nearly 90 per cent of people support water fluoridation.
- The science behind water fluoridation has stood the test of time for more than a century.
- More than 90 per cent of the NSW's population has fluoridated water on tap. Those without are largely in regional areas where dental decay is higher than average.
- Sydney University researchers found 10 years of fluoridation in the Blue Mountains (1993-2003) reduced dental decay in 6-8 year-olds by 73 per cent and in 9-11 year-olds by 75 per cent.
- Fluoridated water has no environmental impact. Soil naturally has fluoride (more than 300 parts per million) and the ocean has around one ppm or more.

All water contains fluoride naturally

Many natural water sources contain fluoride – this is how scientists discovered, more than 100 years ago, that fluoride helped our teeth. Indeed, water fluoridation is often described as replicating Nature.

In Australia, the decline in dental decay has been significant due to water fluoridation. That is why health authorities consider it a safe and effective public health initiative.

For more information, including references, visit www.fluoridenow.com.au



How does fluoride work?

Tooth decay develops when acid destroys the outer surface of the tooth. The acid is produced from sugars by bacteria in the mouth. Fluoride can limit acid, and also repair damage before it becomes permanent. A constant supply of a low level of fluoride in the mouth from fluoridated water acts like a continuous repair kit for teeth.

Effective for everyone

Water fluoridation allows everybody in the community to access fluoride and help protect teeth against decay.

Drinking fluoridated water is safe for children of all ages. Children under 6 should be supervised in proper use of fluoridated toothpaste when brushing teeth.

Many studies prove water fluoridation is safe and effective. One of the best (UK National Health Service Centre for Reviews and Dissemination, 2000) found that water fluoridation protects against tooth decay without causing any health problems.

In some countries, complex water systems make it impossible to fluoridate. Various fluoride facilities in Eastern and Central Europe (during the political turmoil in the late 1980s) closed through neglect. Fluoridated table salt (and salt used in products such as bread) is common in Europe.

One part per million

The actual amount of fluoride added to water is around one 1 ppm. Only a tiny amount of fluoride is needed to help our teeth resist decay.

visit www.fluoridenow.com.au

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“ **One of the ten
greatest public health
achievements
of the 20th Century** ”
US SURGEON-GENERAL (1999)

Teeth For Health is a joint project
of the NSW Centre for Oral Health
Strategy and Rural Health Areas
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NSW HEALTH

NSW Health Messages for a Healthy Mouth

- 1 Eat Well** – choose nutritious food, healthy snacks. Milk foods and sugar-free gum help protect teeth.
- 2 Drink Well** – fluoridated tap water is best. Limit soft drinks, fruit juice and sports drinks.
- 3 Clean Well** – brush properly at least twice a day, especially before bed, with soft bristles. Children should use children’s fluoride toothpaste from 18 months – 5 years.
- 4 Play Well** – wear professionally fitted mouthguards for sports, including training, and choose safe play environments.
- 5 Stay Well** – start regular dental checks from children’s 1st birthday, don’t smoke and limit alcohol consumption.

Full text on www.fluoridenow.com.au
or booklet and posters are available from
Centre for Oral Health Strategy,
PO Box 533 Westmead, NSW 2145



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