

Policy Brief: Advocating for Community Water Fluoridation

Effective for 70+ years

OUR MISSION

To improve oral health for all Pennsylvanians by uniting stakeholders to advance advocacy, policy, education and innovative approaches

WHO WE ARE

A diverse group of leaders from across the state from schools of public health, dental organizations, health insurance firms, advocacy groups, philanthropic organizations, state agencies and other champions

WHAT WE DO

Advancing policies and practices that increase access to oral health services, education, and prevention especially for our most vulnerable Pennsylvanians

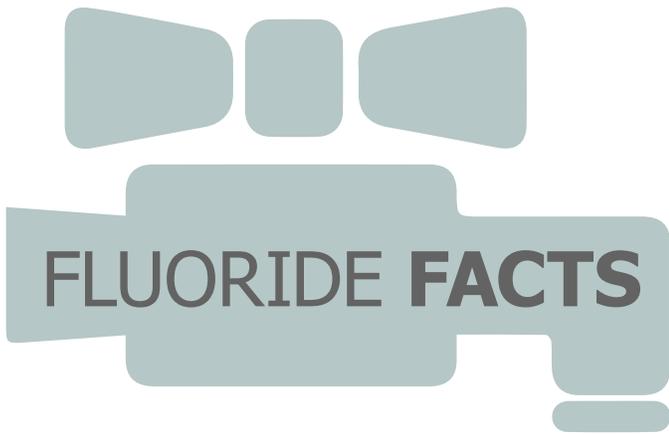
Pennsylvania Coalition for Oral Health continues to support community water fluoridation as the *single most effective* public health measure to prevent tooth decay. Since its introduction more than 70 years ago, adjusting the naturally-occurring levels of fluoride to the Centers for Disease Control-recommended level has dramatically improved the oral health of tens of millions of Americans.

- Fluoride is one of a community's most potent weapons to help fight cavities. Fluoridated water and fluoride dental products are a one-two punch to knock out cavities. Water fluoridation is particularly important, especially for those who lack adequate access to dental care. Studies show that community water fluoridation prevents at least 25 percent of tooth decay in children and adults.
- Many people may not feel that "tooth decay" is a big deal. However, there are children and adults in our state suffering from pain, infection, disfigurement, speech impairments and learning problems due to dental decay. We have a crisis in this country with one in four children suffering from tooth pain. It is the most prevalent chronic childhood disease, more common than obesity, asthma, or diabetes. Water fluoridation and proper oral hygiene are two of the simplest ways to prevent dental caries (cavities).
- On a community level, water fluoridation is one of the few public health measures that saves more money than it costs. Individually, the lifetime cost of fluoridation is less than the cost of one dental filling. Fluoridated water is safe, effective, economical and, by far, one of the best investments in the Commonwealth's oral health.
- Community water fluoridation is simply the adjustment of fluoride that occurs naturally in water to a recommended level to help prevent tooth decay. There are more than 100 international organizations that recognize the public health benefits of fluoridation for preventing tooth decay.
- The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention states that water fluoridation is one of 10 great public health achievements of the 20th century. Generations ago, many people lost their teeth by the time they were middle-aged due to decay. Today, thanks to fluoride, more people than ever are keeping their natural teeth throughout their lifetimes.

PCOH encourages communities to continue to fluoridate their public water systems. Dr. Richard Carmona, the 17th U.S. Surgeon General, stated in his National Call to Action to Promote Oral Health, "Policymakers, community leaders, private industry, health professionals, the media, and the public should affirm that oral health is essential to general health and well-being and take action to make ourselves, our families, and our communities healthier." Recently, the 18th U.S. Surgeon General, Regina Benjamin, said, "Community water fluoridation is one of the most effective choices communities can make to prevent health problems while actually improving the oral health of their citizens."

Community Water Fluoridation has proven to be:
the first step in ensuring all Pennsylvanians have preventive dental care,
safe and effective in fighting dental decay, and
a money-saving public health measure.

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FLUORIDE FACTS

In 1951, Ford City became the first city in Pennsylvania to fluoridate water to the optimal level for public health



1951



49

Percent of Pennsylvania residents receiving the benefit of fluoridated water in their communities

41



Number of the 50 largest U.S. cities, including Philadelphia, fluoridating public water

100



Number of reputable international health and science organizations that recognize fluoride's public health benefits

\$38



Amount of future dental care costs saved by every \$1 invested in community water fluoridation

25



Percent (minimum) of tooth decay prevented during a lifetime thanks to fluoridated water

70



Years of research and experience proving fluoridation is safe for people and the environment

2009



FDA APPROVED

FDA approves fluoridated bottled water and confirms it reduces tooth decay risk