



# About Fluoride

Updated August 2025

## American Dental Association Executive Summary

### *Fluoridation Facts, 2025*

As of the writing and publication of this document, the political and regulatory environment of community water fluoridation is experiencing significant disruption.

There will be periodic electronic updates to this document as governmental regulations change and reviews of sound science- and evidence-based studies are offered through peer-reviewed journals and periodicals.

- Fluoridation of community water supplies is the single most effective public health measure to prevent tooth decay.
- Throughout more than 80 years of research and practical experience, the overwhelming weight of credible scientific evidence has consistently indicated that fluoridation of community water supplies is safe.
- Studies prove water fluoridation continues to be effective in reducing tooth decay by more than 25% in children and adults, even in an era with widespread availability of fluoride from other sources, such as fluoride toothpaste.
- Because of the important role community water fluoridation has played in the reduction of tooth decay, the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has proclaimed it one of 10 great public health achievements of the 20th century (along with vaccinations and infectious disease control).
- Community water fluoridation is the controlled adjustment of fluoride that occurs naturally in all water to optimal levels to prevent tooth decay (0.7 milligrams per liter).
- Community water fluoridation benefits everyone, especially those without access to regular dental care. Fluoridation is a powerful tool in the fight for social justice and health equity.
- Simply by drinking water, people can benefit from fluoridation's cavity protection whether they are at home, work, or school.

- Water that has been fortified with fluoride is similar to fortifying salt with iodine, milk with vitamin D, and orange juice with vitamin C—all of which are supplements, not medications.
- When compared to the cost of other prevention programs, water fluoridation is the most cost-effective means of preventing tooth decay for both children and adults in the United States. The cost of a lifetime of water fluoridation for one person is less than the cost of one filling.
- For community water systems that serve more than 1,000 people, the economic benefit of fluoridation exceeds the cost. The benefit-cost ratio increases as the size of the population served increases (largely due to economies of scale). Fluoridation is a cost-saving method to prevent tooth decay.
- According to data from 2022, 72.3% of the US population is served by public water systems that are optimally fluoridated.
- Fluoridation has been thoroughly tested in the US court system and has been found to be a proper means of furthering public health and welfare.\*
- The American Dental Association (ADA) supports community water fluoridation as a safe, effective, cost-saving, and socially equitable way to prevent tooth decay.
- The ADA is one of the most widely respected sources for information regarding fluoridation and fluorides. It maintains Fluoride and Fluoridation web pages at <http://www.ADA.org/fluoride>.

\* In September 2024, the United States District Court for the Northern District of California ruled in “Food & Water Watch, Inc. v. United States Environmental Protection Agency” (EPA) (<https://www.cand.uscourts.gov/food-and-water-watch-v-us-epa/>) that the current levels of fluoride used in community water fluoridation in the United States present an unreasonable risk of reduced IQ in children under the Toxic Substances Control Act. However, the Court’s ruling has been widely criticized by major health and scientific authorities for drawing conclusions that are not supported by the best available evidence.

At the time of this publication, the EPA has filed an appeal to that ruling.

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# 10 Reasons to Fluoridate Public Water

**Single most effective public health measure to prevent tooth decay.** The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has proclaimed community water fluoridation one of 10 great public health achievements of the 20th century.

**Natural. Fluoride is already present in all water sources, even the oceans.** Water fluoridation is simply the adjustment of fluoride that occurs naturally to a recommended level for preventing tooth decay.

**Similar to fortifying other foods and beverages.** Water that has been fluoridated is similar to fortifying salt with iodine, milk with vitamin D, orange juice with calcium and bread with folic acid.

**Prevents dental disease.** It is the most efficient way to prevent one of the most common childhood diseases – dental decay. An estimated 51 million school hours are lost each year due to dental-related illness.

**Protects all ages against cavities.** Studies show that community water fluoridation prevents at least 25 percent of tooth decay in children and adults, even in an era with widespread availability of fluoride from other sources, such as fluoride toothpaste.

**Safe and effective.** For more than 70 years, the best available scientific evidence consistently indicates that community water fluoridation is safe and effective.

**Saves money.** The average lifetime cost per person to fluoridate a water supply is less than the cost of one dental filling. For most cities, every \$1 invested in water fluoridation saves \$38 in dental treatment costs.

**Recognized by more than 100 organizations.** The American Dental Association (ADA) as well as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the American Medical Association, the World Health Organization and more than 125 national and international organizations recognize the public health benefits of water fluoridation for preventing dental decay.

**Availability of fluoridation continues to grow.** In 2014, 74.4 percent of the U.S. population on public water systems (211.4 million people) received fluoridated water. This is an increase of almost nine percent from 2000. The Healthy People 2020 goal is for 79.6 percent of the population on public water systems to have access to fluoridated water.

**Endorsed by the American Dental Association.** One of the most widely respected sources for information regarding fluoridation and fluoride is the American Dental Association. Learn more on the ADA's website at [ADA.org/fluoride](http://ADA.org/fluoride).

Kentucky Dental Association contact: Dr. Steve Robertson at [steve@kyda.org](mailto:steve@kyda.org)

Learn more at: [ADA.org/fluoride](https://ADA.org/fluoride)

# How to Take Action on Water Fluoridation



## Contact Your State and Component Dental Association

The American Dental Association collaborates with [state and local leaders](#) to keep you informed and prepared for fluoridation changes.



## Talk About [Cavities](#)

Share with your patients and community the importance of prevention. This includes [water fluoridation](#), dental sealants, pre-natal oral health care, and routine Age-1 dental visits. Look at your local Community Needs Assessment.



## Ask Experts About the Evidence

The Council on Advocacy for Access and Prevention has a National Fluoridation Advisory Committee prepared to connect with you. [Contact the ADA](#) to have your questions answered.



## Speak With Your Community

Your local educators, school nurses, pediatricians, public health dept, and community leaders also care about oral health.



## Share with Decision-Makers

Your elected officials or utility board often decide if your water is fluoridated. Take time to share with them the best science.



## Prepare for a City Council Vote

The best way to take action is to initiate or defend community water fluoridation to reduce cavities.

Action for  
**DENTALHEALTH**➔

ADA American Dental Association®

Questions? **Dr. Liz Lense** | [lensee@ada.org](mailto:lensee@ada.org)

Senior Scientist for Population Health Programs