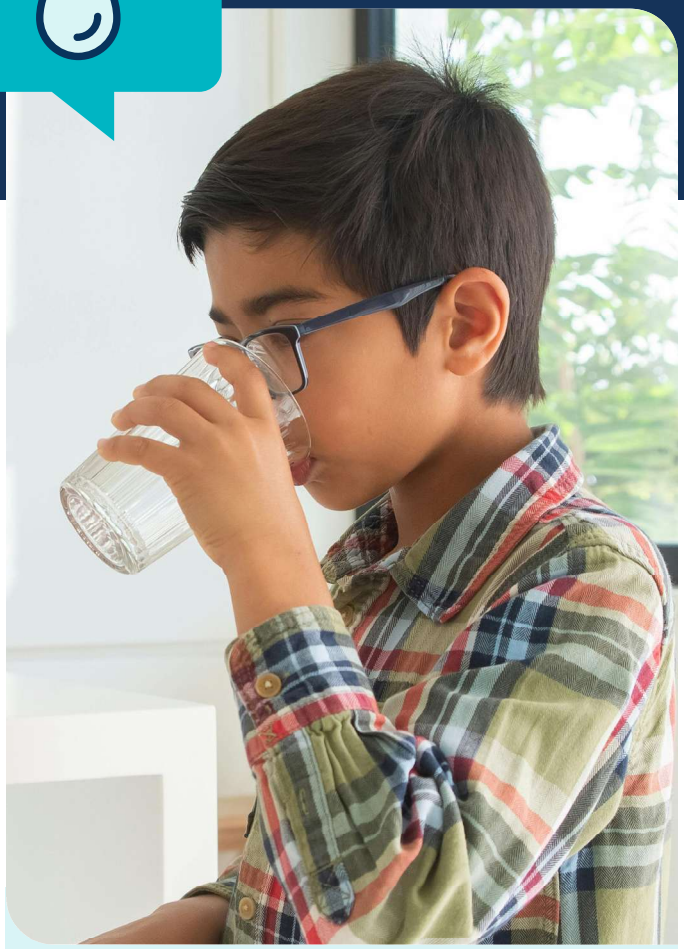
Fluoride



Fluoride is a naturally occurring mineral found in rocks, soil, and water. Consumed at safe levels, fluoride is good for you, like many other naturally occurring minerals — from calcium (found in leafy greens) to halite (also known as table salt). It can help strengthen teeth, prevent cavities, and even reverse early tooth decay.

What is Community Water Fluoridation?

For community members to get an "optimal level" of fluoride (0.7 milligrams per liter), state and local governments may add to the naturally occurring fluoride level in water systems — a process known as fluoridation. Supplementing water in this way continues a U.S. tradition of fortifying foods and beverages and is similar to adding vitamin D to milk or vitamin C to orange juice. As a result, fluoridation provides greater protection for teeth than using toothpaste alone, helping to reduce tooth decay by about 25%.

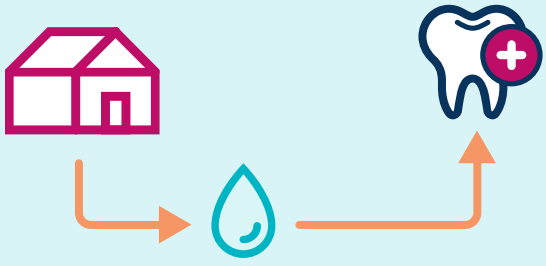
Is it Safe?

According to expert groups like the American Academy of Pediatrics and the American Dental Association, and based on more than 80 years of research and experience, community water fluoridation is safe. In the U.S., fluoride levels are carefully monitored to remain within safe limits. For example, the current recommended water fluoridation level was reset in 2015, based in part on the wider availability of dental products containing fluoride.

Safe levels of water fluoridation make a big difference in individual and community health outcomes. On the next page are three proven benefits of drinking fluoridated water and additional ways to maintain your oral health.

Check Your Community's Water Fluoridation

Community water fluoridation is determined at the state and local levels. You may be able to check your community's public water fluoride levels using the CDC's "My Water's Fluoride" tool. Whether or not your community is included in this tool, you can learn more about your public water system's fluoride levels by contacting your local water provider or visiting their website.



Three Benefits of Drinking Fluoridated Water

1 Fluoride keeps teeth strong.

Drinking fluoridated water exposes your teeth to a consistent, low level of fluoride throughout the day. This protects your teeth from decay. In the long term, drinking fluoridated water leads to fewer cavities, fillings, and pulled teeth.

Community water fluoridation helps prevent about 25% of tooth decay in children and adults, even at a time when fluoride is widely available from other sources, like toothpaste. *(Source: American Dental Association)*

2 Fluoride prevents expensive dental treatments.

One tooth can develop multiple cavities, and each cavity can cost hundreds of dollars to treat. Left untreated, cavities can lead to more serious conditions. When communities have access to the benefits of fluoridated water, people are less likely to leave the dentist's office with a costly bill.

Communities that can access fluoridated water save an average of $32 per person per year by avoiding expensive dental treatments. *(Source: CDC)*

3 Fluoride is an accessible form of preventative health care.

Unlike over-the-counter and prescription products that help prevent tooth decay, fluoridated water is automatically accessible to the whole community. This benefit is particularly important for people with limited access to dental care and dental treatments.

Over 200 million Americans (about 73%) have access to the tooth-protecting benefits of water fluoridation by simply drinking the water available in their communities. *(Source: American Dental Association)*

Protecting Your Oral Health

Drinking fluoridated water is most effective at maintaining oral health when combined with regular use of fluoridated toothpaste and supplements. If your community's water is not fluoridated, there are several ways to supplement fluoride to protect your oral health. Talk to a healthcare provider about using fluoridated products, and schedule regular dental check-ups and cleanings to strengthen your teeth and overall health.



Additional Resources About Fluoridation

For more information about fluoridation, visit these resources:

- Fluoridation | American Academy of Pediatrics
- Fluoridation Facts | American Dental Association

SOURCES

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- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (May 15, 2024). *About Community Water Fluoridation.* https://www.cdc.gov/fluoridation/about/index.html