

Water Fluoridation

Fluoride is a naturally occurring mineral that prevents and protects teeth from decay. It stops and can reverse tooth decay, keeping tooth enamel strong in children and adults. All water naturally contains some fluoride.

Community water fluoridation happens when people decide to adjust the fluoride levels in their water to improve health outcomes in their community. Setting fluoride levels at the right level can prevent tooth decay.

Communities have added fluoride to their water for **more than 75 years** and fluoridated water systems serve nearly 75 percent of the U.S. People who live in communities with fluoridated water are more likely to have healthy teeth than those living in communities without fluoridated water. Individuals in communities that adjust the fluoride levels in their water **save an average of \$32** per person by avoiding treatment for tooth decay.

Every major health organization in the United States and every Surgeon General for the past 50 years has endorsed community water fluoridation. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has named community water fluoridation **one of 10 great public health achievements of the 20th century, along with control of infectious diseases and safer and healthier foods.**

The fluoride concentration in community drinking water is maintained at 0.7 parts per million and represents no health hazards. [Washington state law requires](#) public water systems to notify the Department of Health and its customers of its intention to start or stop fluoridation of its water supply at least 90 days before a vote or decision is made.

Quick Facts

- Fluoride is a natural mineral that protects teeth.
- Fluoride is added to more than 75% of U.S. water systems.
- The amount of fluoride added to drinking water is safe for people to consume.
- Communities started adding fluoride to water systems more than 75 years ago.
- Drinking water with the right amount of fluoride reduces tooth decay by about 25 percent.
- Individuals who have fluoride in their water save an average of \$32 per person on treatment for tooth decay.
- DOH encourages communities to maintain the right level of fluoride in their water to help protect people from tooth decay.
- In Washington, local communities decide if they want to fluoridate their water.

Resources

- [American Dental Association's Fluoridation Facts](#) Information from more than 350 scientific references in an easy-to-use question-and-answer format about water fluoridation's effectiveness, safety, practice, and cost-effectiveness.
- [Association of State and Territorial Dental Directors \(ASTDD\) Best Practice Approach \(PDF\)](#) Community Water Fluoridation: Describes strategies, explores the evidence for the effectiveness of these strategies, and uses practice examples to illustrate successful/innovative implementation.
- [CDC's Community Water Fluoridation Fact Sheet](#) An evidence-based fact sheet outlining why community water fluoridation is safe, effective, reduces disparities, saves money, and is a public health achievement.
- [I Like My Teeth](#): A Campaign for Dental Health by the AAP provides information on fluoridated water to ensure that people of all ages can access the most effective, affordable, and equitable way to protect teeth from decay.



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