

# The fluoridation of public water - love it or leave it

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The Fluoridation of Public Water - Love It or Leave It Part of processing water for public use in the United States includes adding fluoride, among other chemicals. There have been some concern and debate over the addition of fluoride to public drinking water, as the chemical presents both benefits and risks to public health. The following will be a discussion about those benefits and risks. The most cited benefit of fluoridated water is the reduction of cavities, or caries. It is reported that fluoridated water can cause a 60% reduction in caries (Newbrun, 437). Caries are holes in the teeth or areas of deterioration. Not only can caries be terribly unsightly but cause severe pain and can lead to other health issues. Following this fact, the reason given in support of the addition to drinking water are high dental costs. A mouth full of caries can be quite expensive. Those who are low income will not even be able to afford the proper care necessary to treat the caries that they may develop and that cost will fall on the government. While many medical assistance programs developed for low-income people do not offer dental care, the horrible pain that a tooth ache can cause may require medical assistance. To avoid all of these issues the government continues to add fluoride to the public water supply. While there have been some concerns over adding fluoride to the public water, countries that do so are hesitant to discontinue the practice for fear that there will be an increase in caries and, thereby, an increase in dental care spending. It is the government that controls the fluoridation of public waters but, oddly enough, the FDA does not regulate the amount of fluoride that is pumped into the water supply. There are some countries that do not fluoridate their water. Some are underdeveloped countries that see their lack of fluoride as an issue that is negatively affecting public health while there are other countries that do not

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fluoridate because they feel that its effects are harmful. Out of all the countries in the world, only eight of them fluoridate over 50% of their water; The United States, Australia, Singapore, Colombia, Israel, Ireland, Malaysia, and New Zealand (Mercola). However, the majority of non-English speaking countries, like China and Japan, do not fluoridate the water (Kauffman, 38). Fluoride is not a necessary nutrient and can even prove to be toxic in overdose. There is a form of fluoride, calcium fluoride, which is safe. This chemical is often found in bones as a mineral (Linderman, 75). The type of fluoride that is put into the drinking water, however, is not a nutrient required for regular bodily functions. Too much fluoride can be very harmful and cause adverse health effects. For example, there is a condition that is called 'Fluorosis', which occurs when people get too much fluoride before they are of eight years old (Alvarez et al, e15). This condition can cause damage to not only the teeth, but also the bones, making the possible benefits of fluoride utterly meaningless. In addition, it has been reported that fluoride can cause brain damage, as well as damage to the thyroid and kidneys (Mercola). For this reason, there are some strong arguments used to oppose putting fluoride in public drinking water. One of the problems is that the actual dosage amount of fluoride cannot be controlled when it is placed into the drinking water. The chemical will be taken at varying amounts. There are other arguments which state that the fluoridation of public water is a violation of rights. Water is necessary for life. Yet, there are those who are sensitive to fluoride and cannot drink it. It is unfair that people cannot choose for themselves rather or not to ingest fluoride. Overall, it is the opinion of the author that the public water supply should not be fluoridated, but that the practice should be discontinued. It is a potentially hazardous

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activity whose risks far outweigh its benefits. For if the addition of fluoride to public water is supposed to reduce caries, but actually is responsible for damage to teeth and bones due to fluorosis, there are no real benefits. In the countries that do not fluoridate the water, the citizens' dental health is simply a reflection of the care that the individual gives their teeth; such as diet and brushing. On a regular bottle of toothpaste that contains fluoride, there is a warning about ingestion, yet this is the same type of fluoride that is in the water. Proper oral care can effectively prevent caries, but a health conscious person, who tends to drink plenty of water, as is recommended, will find that they are at risk from the toxic tendencies of fluoride-that just is not fair. Works Cited Alvarez J. A., Rezende K. M., Marocho S. M., Alves F. B., Celiberti P., Ciamponi A. L. " Dental Fluorosis: Exposure, Prevention and Management" J Clin Exp Dent. 1(1): e14-e18. 2009. Kauffman, J " Water Fluoridation: A Review of Recent Research and Actions". Journal of American Physicians and Surgeons 10(2) 38-44. 2005. Mercola, Joseph. " Warning: This Daily Habit Can Damage Your Bones, Brain, Kidneys, and Thyroid." 1 July 2010. Mercola. com. 9 Sep 2011. Newbrun, E. " Water Fluoridation and Dietary Fluoride Ingestion." West J Med 122: 437-442. May 1975. Lindermann, G. " Calcium Fluoride in Demineralized Bones from Rats with Experimental Chronic Fluorosis." Scandinavia Journal Dental Res. 83(2): 75-87. March 1975.