

Key Messages: Community Water Fluoridation

- ▶ Tooth decay (cavities) is the [most common chronic disease](#) for adults and children in the United States. It disrupts people's lives and undermines their success.
 - Each year, children lose a total of [34 million hours of school time](#) due to emergency or unplanned dental treatments.
 - The U.S. economy [loses over \\$45 billion in productivity](#) each year because of untreated dental disease.
- ▶ Fluoride is one of the best tools for reducing the risk of cavities. Fluoride is [a mineral that exists naturally](#) in all water supplies: lakes, rivers, groundwater and even the oceans. When drinking water has the recommended amount of fluoride, it strengthens the tooth enamel and reduces cavities in adults and children by 25%.
- ▶ [63% of U.S. residents](#) have access to drinking water that is fluoridated. Millions of people have access to water with enough natural fluoride to reach the recommended level. But in most communities, the local water system must add a little more fluoride to reach the recommended level, which is 0.7 milligrams per liter.
- ▶ The leading health, dental and medical experts agree that water fluoridation is a wise approach to keep communities healthy. [These experts include](#) the American Academy of Pediatrics, American Dental Association, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
- ▶ Fluoride in water and in toothpaste [work in complementary ways](#) — like seatbelts and air bags in a car. This is not an either-or choice. *Both* forms of fluoride are important for good health.
- ▶ We know that fluoridated water matters because researchers have studied what happens when a community ends fluoridation. Calgary, one of the largest cities in Canada, stopped fluoridation in 2011. Within several years, [the cavity rate rose significantly](#) — rising well above the cavity rate in another city where the water was still fluoridated. Even though Calgary families had access to fluoride toothpaste, that wasn't enough by itself to keep children healthy. Because of this negative experience, the Calgary city council [voted to resume fluoridation](#).
- ▶ [Decades of research](#) show the safety of fluoridated water. The vast majority of studies that opponents of fluoridation circulate are from China, India or other countries where the natural levels of fluoride are far higher than the levels in a fluoridated community in the U.S.
- ▶ Opponents claim that a report by the National Toxicology Program (NTP) shows that fluoridation lowers IQ scores. But they leave out a key point. The National Academies of Sciences reviewed this report, and it concluded that the report [did not provide enough evidence](#) to support its claims. The National Academies also wrote that nothing in the report cast doubt on the safety of low levels of fluoride (such as fluoridated water). Since then, NTP has dropped the “hazard” designation from its fluoride report.
- ▶ Fluoridation saves money for families and taxpayers. A major study found that each person in a fluoridated community was saving [an average of \\$32.19 each year](#). Studies in [Texas](#) and [Louisiana](#) have shown that fluoridation saves state Medicaid programs money by reducing the need to treat dental disease.