



NEW ZEALAND DENTAL ASSOCIATION

Revised 2012

New Zealand Dental Association Inc. Statement on Water Fluoridation

The NZDA continues to strongly support and promote community water fluoridation as a safe and effective preventative measure to improve public oral health

1. Fluoride is a naturally occurring element. It is found in the air, soil, water, seawater, plants and many foods. In NZ, fluoride occurs naturally in all water supplies, but at a level that is too low to protect against tooth decay. Adjusting the water fluoride level to 0.7-1.0 parts per million will provide protection from tooth decay.
2. Fluoride protects teeth by lowering the pH at which enamel starts to demineralise, and promotes the repair of teeth by aiding remineralisation of the tooth surface. It works best at doing this when it is used in low concentration and relatively frequently. Water fluoridation is an efficient, effective and safe way to protect and repair teeth.
3. Water fluoridation is a cost effective way for communities to receiving fluoride. ESR research for NZ shows it is cost effective for communities as small as 1000 people.
4. Water supplies have been fluoridated in the USA since 1945, and New Zealand since 1954, and currently over 360 million people in 27 countries receive fluoridated water. The safety of water fluoridation has been intensively researched for over 65 years, and continues to be subject to review in New Zealand and overseas. Reviews of research from Australia, Europe, the UK and the USA have consistently found benefits to dental health and no evidence of adverse general health effects from water fluoridation at optimal levels.
5. It has been known since the 1930s that fluoride can cause dental fluorosis which is normally seen as small white flecks or patches on the tooth surface. A series of New Zealand studies have found that while water fluoridation in New Zealand is associated with an increase in white flecking on teeth in young children, water fluoridation is not associated with unaesthetic teeth. The 2009 New Zealand Oral Health Survey reported no significant differences in the levels of dental fluorosis of people living in fluoridated and non-fluoridated areas, and importantly no cases at all of severe fluorosis in the people examined. To reduce the potential for dental fluorosis it is recommended that toothpaste be issued as a smear on the child's brush and that children don't eat toothpaste.
6. When considering the slight flecking that can occur in association water fluoridation, it is also necessary to consider the much more significant effects of pain and poor appearance caused by dental decay.
7. Water fluoridation benefits people of all ages with natural teeth. Among young children and adults decay rates are approximately 20-30% lower in communities with water fluoridation.