



# Community Water Fluoridation

## Key Messages & Resources *Updated 1/23/25*

### In Summary

Over 100 health organizations, including the American Dental Association (ADA), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the American Medical Association (AMA), the World Health Organization (WHO), and the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), support the safety and effectiveness of low-level fluoride in preventing cavities, backed by decades of research and practical experience.

### About the Effectiveness of Community Water Fluoridation

- Over 75 years of scientific evidence show that community water fluoridation at the optimal amount is a safe and effective way to prevent tooth decay and has played a major role in improving the public's oral health.
- Fluoride is nature's cavity fighter! When naturally occurring fluoride levels in water are too low to prevent decay, communities can adjust the level to 0.7 mg/L, as recommended by the CDC. This is known as community water fluoridation.
- How much is 0.7 mg/L? It's so small, it's comparable to 1 minute in 1,000 days! The recommended amount of fluoride in water is very small, but the oral health benefits are huge!
- Even with the widespread availability of fluoride toothpaste, studies show community water fluoridation continues to be effective in reducing tooth decay by about 25 percent in children and adults.
- Community water fluoridation has been [hailed by](#) the CDC as one of 10 great public health achievements of the 20th century.
- Organizations like the ADA, [AAP](#), and the CDC state that water fluoridation and fluoride toothpaste work together to help prevent tooth decay and offer more protection against decay than using either one alone.
- According to the CDC, fluoridated water keeps a low level of fluoride in the mouth throughout the day, while fluoride toothpaste delivers higher concentrations at important times of the day, such as bedtime.
- When communities add fluoride to the optimal level, it democratizes oral health and benefits everyone—regardless of age, income, or geographic location.
- The average lifetime cost per person to fluoridate a water supply is less than the cost of just one dental filling. For most municipalities, every \$1 invested in water fluoridation saves \$38 in dental treatment costs.
- The ADA will continue to actively advocate for the fluoridation of public water supplies as an effective way to prevent tooth decay and promote oral health.
- The ADA is committed to the overall health of the public in addition to its oral health and will continue evaluating the validity of emerging evidence and research to support public health advances.
- As a dentist, I see firsthand the benefits of fluoride—both in drinking water and topically in products like fluoride toothpaste. *[insert a patient or community story to illustrate your point]*
- For reliable information about the safety, benefits, and effectiveness of fluoride in promoting oral health, I encourage you to visit [ADA.org/fluoride](https://ada.org/fluoride).



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### ADA Resources

Here are helpful, science-based ADA resources regarding the benefits of fluoridation as a proven way to prevent tooth decay:

- [Fluoridation at ADA.org](#): Facts, resources, and advocacy for fluoridation.
- [Fluoridation Facts](#): This premier ADA guide to fluoridation includes the newest research on the topic, helping keep policymakers and the general public in the know.
- [Fluoridation FAQs](#): Science-based answers to questions you may have.
- [Clinical Guidelines](#): Recommendations for the effective use of fluoride products with your patients.
- [Recent Fluoridation Issues](#): Addresses emerging issues related to fluoridation, such as neurotoxicity/IQ and infant formula.
- [ADA Press Statements](#): Read more about ADA's stance on fluoridation and its response to recent criticisms.

### Addressing Recent Criticisms

Community water fluoridation, supported by decades of scientific evidence as safe and effective at preventing tooth decay, has come under renewed attention following recent statements and actions by individuals and advocacy groups.

#### ADA Comments on Florida Surgeon General's Stance on Fluoridation

##### *Summary*

The ADA strongly opposes Florida Surgeon General Joseph Ladapo's recent [comments](#) calling community water fluoridation "medical malpractice" and urging municipalities to end its practice. In a November 23 statement, ADA President Dr. Brett Kessler called these remarks "misinformed and dangerous," emphasizing that fluoridation is a proven public health measure that reduces dental disease and supports overall health.

The ADA reaffirmed its support for community water fluoridation at the recommended level of 0.7 parts per million, citing decades of research showing it reduces tooth decay by 25% and helps address access-to-care challenges, especially in states like Florida, where over 5 million residents live in dental shortage areas. [Read Press Release](#) // [Read ADA News Story](#)

#### ADA Comments on the *JAMA Pediatrics* Article

##### *Summary*

An [article](#) in *JAMA Pediatrics* titled "Fluoride Exposure and Children's IQ Scores: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis" claims fluoride exposure may lower children's IQ. However, it offers no new evidence to change current water fluoridation practices. In a January 6 statement, the ADA reaffirmed that fluoridation at recommended levels reduces tooth decay and supports oral health. [Read Press Release](#) // [Read ADA News Story](#)

##### *About the Article*



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- The article includes data omitted from the National Toxicology Program (NTP) report released in August 2024, which failed peer review twice and underwent significant revisions.
- The ADA's National Fluoridation Advisory Committee (NFAC) and other experts determined the final NTP report did not adequately address or resolve biases and weaknesses identified in earlier drafts.
- Dr. Steven Levy, an ADA expert on fluoride, highlighted significant biases and methodological flaws in the meta-analysis and confirmed no connection between recommended fluoride levels and lower IQ.
- Studies, such as the NTP report, that examine naturally high fluoride levels—exceeding more than double the U.S. recommended levels—are not comparable to community water fluoridation practices in the U.S.
- [Research](#) with fluoride levels consistent with U.S. recommendations shows no measurable effect on cognitive development or IQ in children.
- As a science-based organization, the ADA welcomes further U.S.-based research on fluoridation while standing by the proven safety and benefits of current practices.
- The ADA encourages drinking optimally fluoridated water, brushing with fluoride toothpaste, and maintaining a healthy diet to prevent dental disease.

### ADA Comments on the Cochrane Library Review

#### *Summary*

A [review](#) published Oct. 4 by the Cochrane Library contends community water fluoridation is less effective now than it was in the 1970s, but the ADA believes the review does not present any new or significant findings on the subject and the Association continues to endorse fluoridation as beneficial to oral health. [Read Press Release](#) // [Read ADA News Story](#)

#### *About the Review*

- Researchers from the Universities of Manchester, Dundee and Aberdeen in the United Kingdom examined 157 studies — 135 on fluorosis and 22 on decay prevention — that compared communities in high-income countries that had fluoride added to their water with those that had no additional fluoride in the water.
- They conclude that the benefit of fluoridation has declined since the 1970s, when fluoride toothpaste became more widely available.
- However, they state “the impact of community water fluoridation in low- and middle-income countries is less clear, due to the absence of recent research.
- NFAC examined the review and noted limitations in the criteria the investigators used for the inclusion of studies and omission of significant findings.
- The ADA and NFAC said there are many other recent studies excluded from the review that show negative impacts on public health once fluoride is removed from the water supply.
- The NFAC also notes that the review did not rely on enough high-quality studies. NFAC suggested the authors must emphasize caution in interpreting results based on the very small number of recent studies.

### ADA Response to the EPA Lawsuit



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### *Summary*

This court ruling provides no scientific basis for the American Dental Association to change its endorsement of community water fluoridation as safe and beneficial to oral health. The ADA issued a statement on the September 2024 court ruling. [Read Press Release](#) // [Read ADA News Story](#)

**Update (Jan. 17, 2025):** On Jan. 10, the ADA, along with 12 other organizations, sent a [coalition letter](#) urging the EPA to appeal the court ruling. The EPA officially filed the appeal on Jan. 17.

### *About the Case*

Environmental nonprofit Food & Water Watch and anti-fluoride groups like the Fluoride Action Network brought the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to court after their petition to ban water fluoridation was denied by the EPA in 2017.

### *About the Ruling*

- A federal court ruled on Tuesday, Sept. 24, 2024, against the EPA, ordering that the agency take action to further evaluate potential health risks from currently recommended fluoride levels in the U.S. drinking water supply. “Action” is undefined at this point, but examples of potential “action” are labeling notification or regulatory action to adjust the therapeutic level.
- Judge Edward Chen said his ruling does not conclude with certainty that fluoridated water is injurious to public health, but that the evidence of its potential risk is enough to force the EPA to act and that fluoride is hazardous at the therapeutic level of 0.7 parts fluoride per million parts water are too close to U.S. drinking water levels.
- The judge's ruling cites a National Toxicology Program (NTP) review released in August, which concluded that "higher levels" of fluoride are linked to lowered IQ in children.

### *About the NTP Report*

- The NTP review does not provide any new or conclusive evidence that should compel any changes in current U.S. community water fluoridation practices because it did not find harm associated with the current optimally fluoridated water level of 0.7 parts fluoride per million. The ADA's official statement on the NTP Report is available [here](#).
- The studies in the review were conducted outside the U.S. in areas with high levels of naturally occurring fluoride in water. The NTP acknowledged that studies of fluoride exposure at recommended levels have not reliably demonstrated effects on cognitive development.
- Despite its discussion of the alleged impact of fluoride on IQ, the NTP monograph itself acknowledges the weakness of evidence in its studies and cannot establish fluoride as the cause of affecting IQ.

### **Advancing Dentistry Under the New Administration**

- The ADA stands ready to engage in important conversations with President Trump and has already offered our assistance to continue shaping oral healthcare policies.
- On January 19, a sponsored editorial by ADA President Dr. Brett Kessler in the [Washington Post](#) highlights oral health's integral connection to overall health and the need for a paradigm shift in the nation's approach to dental care.



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- Dr. Kessler emphasizes dental insurance reform, disease prevention, and oral health literacy as key areas of focus, along with the essential role that a robust, well-trained dental workforce plays in the adequate provision of oral health services in our communities.
- Fluoride plays an important role in optimal oral health. In the editorial, Dr. Kessler states, “Maintaining a robust community water fluoridation initiative — which adjusts the level of naturally occurring fluoride in water to combat tooth decay — is proven to prevent dental disease before it starts.”