

Facts

on water fluoridation in Queensland

fluoride
the missing link



Tooth decay and fluoride

- Queenslanders have the highest levels of tooth decay and the lowest level of access to water fluoridation in Australia.
- Fluoride is a naturally occurring compound found in water, plants, rocks, soil, air and foods.
- Topping up fluoride levels in water can reduce the risk of dental decay by up to 40%.
- Levels of tooth decay for Queensland children are much higher than those in other States and Territories, and the gap may be widening.
- 67% of Queensland children have experienced tooth decay by eight years of age.
- Children aged 5 to 12 years in Townsville (which has been fluoridated since 1964) have 45 per cent less tooth decay than Brisbane children.
- Every year, around 2000 pre-schoolers need to be hospitalised for severe dental decay.
- Only 5% of Queenslanders have access to water fluoridation compared to 70–100% coverage in other States and Territories.
- Townsville, Bamaga, Dalby, Mareeba and Moranbah councils provide water fluoridation.
- Several other States are continuing to make progress towards 100% fluoridation for populations of 1000 or more.

**Every person of every age
benefits from drinking fluoridated
water throughout their life. Children
benefit as soon as their teeth are
formed and elderly people
keep their teeth for longer –
fluoride reduces their chances
of developing tooth decay.**

Cost-effectiveness of water fluoridation

- Evidence of improvements in oral health will be shown within five years of implementation.
- A recent review of water fluoridation found an average of 2.25 less decayed teeth per child. That is 225 less decayed teeth in a population of 100 children.
- For each \$1 invested in water fluoridation, the estimated saving for an individual is between \$12.60 – \$80.00, with greatest benefit to the most disadvantaged.

Safety of water fluoridation

- Numerous studies and subsequent reviews have confirmed the effectiveness of water fluoridation in reducing dental decay for the whole population.
- The fluoridation of public water supplies has been practised around the world for more than sixty years; it is acknowledged as one of the 10 greatest public health achievements of the 20th century.
- A recent national review of water fluoridation found no negative health effects and only a slight increase in dental fluorosis.
- Water fluoridation gives extra protection against tooth decay but a healthy diet, regular brushing and flossing and regular dental check-ups are essential for good oral health.
- More than 150 major health organisations including the World Health Organisation, the Australian Medical Association (AMA), and the Australian Dental Association (ADA) support water fluoridation.

For more information on water fluoridation go to the following websites:

Queensland Health:
www.health.qld.gov.au/fluoride

Australian Dental Association:
www.ada.org.au

World Health Organisation:
www.who.int/en



Queensland Government
Queensland Health