

## How does fluoride work?

Water fluoridation combats tooth decay in three ways.



1

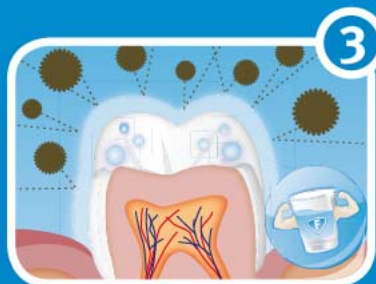
Bacteria in the mouth make acids that cause tooth decay.

Fluoride stops the acids attacking the teeth.



2

Without fluoride – bacteria containing acid breaks down tooth enamel and causes tooth decay.



3

Drinking fluoridated water replaces lost minerals and repairs damaged tooth enamel. This continual replacement stops the progression of tooth decay.



More than  
**150 major health  
and scientific organisations  
support  
water fluoridation**

### Further information

For more information contact  
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[www.health.qld.gov.au/fluoride](http://www.health.qld.gov.au/fluoride)

**13 HEALTH (13 43 25 84)**  
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Queensland Health

**Better health  
for all Queenslanders**



# Water fluoridation



## The benefits of water fluoridation

- Our teeth need the protection of fluoride throughout life to avoid the pain and costs of tooth decay.
- Children benefit as soon as their teeth are formed – giving the best chance of having healthy teeth for life.
- Teenagers benefit as they are at higher risk of developing tooth decay.
- Young adults benefit as they can spend less time and money on expensive dental treatment.
- Middle aged people can enjoy a healthier more comfortable lifestyle by avoiding the pain and costs of dental treatment.
- Elderly people are now keeping their teeth longer and will benefit from being well-protected against tooth and gum conditions.



No matter what age everyone benefits from fluoride

## Water fluoridation in Queensland

In 2008, the Queensland Government introduced the *Water Fluoridation Act 2008*. This Act requires that all water supplies serving more than 1000 people introduce fluoride into their water system with implementation occurring gradually until 31 December 2012.

Prior to 2008, only five per cent of Queenslanders had access to fluoridated drinking water while other States and Territories have been fluoridated for 30–50 years.

By the end of 2012, more than 90 per cent of Queenslanders will have access to fluoridated drinking water.



## Safety of water fluoridation

Water fluoridation gives extra protection against tooth decay but a healthy diet, regular brushing and flossing and regular dental check-ups are all essential for good oral health.

The fluoridation of public water supplies has been practised around the world for more than 60 years, it is acknowledged as one of the 10 greatest public health achievements for the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Numerous studies and subsequent reviews have confirmed the safety and effectiveness of water fluoridation in reducing dental decay for the whole population.



## Common fluoride myths

**Myth:** *Water fluoridation is bad for babies*

**Fact:** Water fluoridation has been endorsed by the World Health Organization, Australian Medical Association and American Academy of Pediatrics, and poses no known health risks for babies and young children.

**Myth:** *Fluoride causes cancer*

**Fact:** Cancer rates in the rest of Australia (mostly fluoridated for decades) are no higher than in Queensland (largely non-fluoridated until 2008).

**Myth:** *Fluoride causes allergies*

**Fact:** Fluoride is found naturally in most foods and water. No credible research has linked water fluoridation to allergies, hypersensitivity or other immunological effects.

**Myth:** *Water fluoridation is banned in Europe*

**Fact:** No country has banned water fluoridation.

**Fact:** In many European countries, the large number of separate water sources used for drinking water makes water fluoridation impractical. Many of these countries use salt fluoridation as an alternative.

**Myth:** *Water fluoridation is mass medication*

**Fact:** Queensland Health does not consider the addition of fluoride to drinking water to be 'mass medication', but simply adjusting the level of a substance already found naturally in the water to provide a substantial public health benefit.

Water fluoridation — better health for all Queenslanders