

Facts

on water fluoridation in Queensland



fluoride



Tooth decay and fluoride

- Queenslanders have the highest levels of tooth decay in Australia.
- Levels of tooth decay for Queensland children are higher than those in other states and territories.
- 67 per cent of Queensland children have experienced tooth decay by eight years of age.
- Every year, around 2000 pre-schoolers need to be hospitalised for severe dental decay.
- 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 per cent.
- 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 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.
- Queensland Health no longer recommends the routine use of fluoride supplements, as they do not provide the same health benefit as fluoridated water, and may increase the risk of dental fluorosis.

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 all essential for good oral health.
- More than 150 major health organisations including the World Health Organization, the Australian Medical Association (AMA), and the Australian Dental Association (ADA) support water fluoridation.

