

# The Benefits of Water Fluoridation

Fluoridation plays a protective role against dental decay throughout life, benefitting not only children but also adults.

The maximum reduction in dental decay is achieved when fluoride is available during tooth formation (systemically) and topically at the tooth surface during all life stages. Water fluoridation provides both types of exposure.

- People in the United States are living longer and retaining more of their natural teeth than ever before. As the older population in America grows, and as more people keep their natural teeth for longer periods of time, dental decay will remain a significant health problem. Therefore, water fluoridation is an essential prevention method for all age groups.
- Water fluoridation plays an important role in the prevention of root decay. Because older adults experience more problems with gum recession, the risk of root decay increases with age. Studies have demonstrated that fluoride is incorporated into the structure of the root surface, making it more resistant to decay.
- Studies demonstrate that the topical effect of fluoride in an adult's mouth during the early stages of decay can not only stop the decay process but also make the enamel surface more resistant to future acid attacks.
- Dental decay is reduced by 27 percent in adults according to an analysis of studies on the effectiveness of fluoridation.
- Fluoridation conserves natural tooth structure by preventing the need for initial fillings and subsequent replacement of fillings.
- Water fluoridation contributes much more to overall health than simply reducing dental decay: it prevents needless infection, pain, suffering and loss of teeth; improves the quality of life; and saves vast sums of money in dental treatment costs.
- With the exception of water fluoridation, virtually all primary preventive dental programs target only children and youth.

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