

Answers to Your Common Questions About Fluoride



Water operators perform a valuable public service by adjusting the level of fluoride in water to prevent cavities in their community.

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Why do communities fluoridate their water and what are its benefits?

Fluoride is a naturally occurring mineral that prevents cavities. For the last 80 years, communities have been adjusting fluoride in drinking water to make sure everyone has access to this proven method to protect teeth. The optimal amount is 0.7 milligrams per liter (mg/L) — equivalent to a few drops in 55 gallons of water. Community water fluoridation keeps people from losing their teeth, reducing the need for dentures. People are also less likely to go the emergency room for dental pain and spend less money on dental treatments when they have access to fluoride in their drinking water. Children receive the additional benefit of fluoride strengthening their teeth as they form.

Is fluoridated water at 0.7 mg/L safe?

Yes, water fluoridation at 0.7 mg/L is safe and the practice of fluoridating water has been widely studied. The U.S. recommends a fluoride level of 0.7 mg/L. In some areas of the world, natural levels of fluoride are much higher. At higher levels, fluoride may cause negative health impacts. But studies researching lower fluoride levels like those found in the U.S. show no such effects. The research is complex, but the level recommended in the U.S. is safe and effective.

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Is it safe for water operators to add fluoride to water?

Water operators must follow safety precautions when handling water additives. Using the proper personal protective equipment means water operators will not have unnecessary exposure to fluoride additives. If a community has questions, contact the appropriate Department of Natural Resources representative for the most up-to-date information about equipment needs and safe storing and handling procedures.

Do fluoride additives impact equipment?

When fluoride is stored properly and equipment maintained, the equipment will have a long, useful life. Corrosion and etching can occur when the additive is improperly ventilated or stored. Properly handling fluoride before adding it to the water supply will prevent this. Water operators should follow all ventilation procedures, and check seals regularly, correcting leaks as they occur.

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What's the status of water fluoridation in Wisconsin?

In Wisconsin, about 85% of people served by a public water system have fluoridated water. Many communities continue to adjust the fluoride content of their water as part of an equation (alongside access to dental care and individual behavior like flossing and brushing teeth) that contributes to good health.

There is a lot of information making news and being sent to water operators on the topic of fluoride in community water and leaders are working to make the best decisions for their communities. Because fluoride is naturally occurring in drinking water, communities need to control fluoride levels in water, and these recommendations ensure that fluoride levels will remain safe and maximize health benefits.



Visit the [Wisconsin Oral Health Program's Fluoride and Community Water Fluoridation webpage](https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/oral-health/fluoride-community-water-fluoridation.htm) for more information!

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