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Fluoridation Initiatives

Nearly all tooth decay can be prevented when fluoridation is combined with dental sealants and other fluoride products, such as toothpaste.

Why is water fluoridation so important? People living in communities with fluoridated drinking water experience 15 to 40 percent less tooth decay than those without fluoridation. Fluoride is absorbed by the gastrointestinal tract and distributed by the bloodstream to the bones and hard tissues of the teeth, making them less susceptible to decay.

The American Dental Association and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in 2015 celebrated the 70th anniversary of community water fluoridation in the United States — a development the CDC refers to as the "single most cost-effective public health measure of the 20th century."

Delta Dental's Involvement

Seventy percent of all Americans have the benefit of fluoridated water. However, there are still many states with limited public access to fluoridated water.

Delta Dental's involvement in fluoridation advocacy has improved this picture. We've been active in the California community water fluoridation effort as a member of the California Fluoridation Advisory Council, playing a part in an effort that resulted in an expansion of fluoridation to 18 million residents in southern California who receive water from the Metropolitan Water District.

The CFAC is a public-private partnership includes the California Department of Health Services, the California Dental Association, the Dental Health Foundation and several other interested agencies.

We've hosted the nation's first national fluoridation summit, sponsored a subsequent fluoridation summit offered by the American Dental Association, participated in trainings of oral health advocates on effective fluoridation advocacy in Albany, New York and Atlanta, Georgia, and supported legislation in Pennsylvania to expand fluoridation.

Wherever there is opportunity in Delta Dental's 15-state operating area, Delta Dental is ready to lend a hand to expand this most important public health measure

What is Fluoride?

Fluoride is a compound of the element fluorine, naturally present in water, soil, air and many foods.

Fluoride absorbs easily into tooth enamel, especially in children's growing teeth. As teeth develop, fluoride makes the entire tooth structure more resistant to decay.

Public water fluoridation is considered the most efficient and cost-effective way to prevent cavities, but other sources of fluoridation are important; many states or counties still don't have fluoridated tap water. (You may check with your local water department for more current numbers.)

Another reason to be concerned about intake of fluoridated water is that people are drinking more bottled water, which contains minimal amounts of fluoride. In-home filtration systems may also eliminate the fluoride in tap water.

If you or your children don't drink fluoridated water, here are some ways you can add more

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- Commercially prepared foods and beverages that are fluoride-fortified.
- Fluoridated toothpaste and/or professionally-applied gels or varnishes. These products can help strengthen teeth by hardening the outer enamel surface.
- Dietary fluoride supplements (tablets, drops or lozenges). Supplements are available only by prescription and are intended for children ages six months to 16 years living in areas without fluoridated water in their community.