



## COMMUNITY WATER FLUORIDATION FACT SHEET

*For nearly 80 years, community water fluoridation has proven to be a safe, effective and economical way to prevent tooth decay in children and adults – regardless of an individual's age, income or education. The Wisconsin Dental Association and its more than 3,100 member dentists and dental hygienists are committed to promoting quality oral health care and support this public health achievement.*

### **Quick Fluoride Facts**

- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have proclaimed fluoridation of community water supplies one of the most significant public health advances of the 20th century and one of the safest, most cost-effective ways to increase overall oral health.
- More than 125 national and international health, service and professional organizations recognize the public health benefits of fluoridation, including the U.S. Surgeon General, American Dental Association, Canadian Dental Association, U.S. Public Health Service, American Medical Association, American Cancer Society, American Academy of Pediatrics and the World Health Organization. The best information with peer-reviewed studies is hosted by the American Academy of Pediatrics at [www.ilikemyteeth.org](http://www.ilikemyteeth.org).
- Tooth decay remains a significant public health problem in Wisconsin, with an estimated 55% of third-graders having had cavities, according to the state Department of Health Services.
- National health care statistics show oral disease causes children to miss approximately 54 million school hours and adults to lose 164 million work hours each year.
- Community water fluoridation is adjusting a naturally occurring mineral in public water systems to an optimal level for oral health benefits. Approximately 90% of Wisconsin's population on public water supplies has access to the benefits of optimal levels of fluoride.

### **Community Water Fluoridation is Safe**

- Fluoride is nature's cavity fighter, with small amounts present in all water sources such as lakes, rivers and wells. Community water fluoridation is simply the adjustment of fluoride already present in water to a very low level that helps prevent tooth decay.
- Adding fluoride to drinking water is like adding vitamin D to milk, iodine to table salt and folic acid to breads and cereals.
- Scientific research has found that most causes of fluorosis (white spots on tooth surfaces) are caused by misuse of fluoridated toothpaste.

### **Community Water Fluoridation is Effective**

- The CDC reports that drinking fluoridated water reduces tooth decay over a lifetime by at least 25%, even in an era with widespread availability of fluoride from other sources, including toothpaste and dental office treatments.
- Fluoride helps rebuild tooth surfaces and prevents cavities from continuing to form.
- With older Americans keeping their teeth longer, fluoride continues to be important for preventing tooth decay among seniors. Older adults are especially susceptible to tooth decay, because of exposed root surfaces and mouth dryness.

### **Community Water Fluoridation is Economical**

- The estimated return on investment for community water fluoridation ranges from \$4 per person in small communities of 5,000 people or less to \$32 per person in large communities of 200,000 people or more, according to the CDC.
- An individual can have a lifetime of fluoridated water for less than the cost of one dental filling.