

# Fact Sheet

November, 2010

## Fluoride & Drinking Water

Fluoride is a mineral that occurs naturally in the environment. Fluoride is found in soil, air and water.

At appropriate levels, Fluoride in drinking water has been proven to significantly reduce cavities and dental decay. This finding is strongly supported by an extensive body of Canadian and international research, and has been commonly accepted in the scientific community for almost 70 years.

Scientific guidance on optimal fluoridation levels is routinely reviewed by expert panels convened by Health Canada and conveyed to all provinces and territories.

The most recent Health Canada review, undertaken in 2007, assessed the latest available evidence on the benefits and potential risks. This review concluded that there is no harmful health risk from the fluoridation of community drinking water at current levels and that fluoridation continues to be an effective public health strategy to prevent dental disease.

The City of Toronto's policies and practices in drinking water fluoridation are guided by these expert reviews and recommendations. Toronto Public Health and Toronto Water are committed to ensuring the safety of the Toronto drinking water supply, and protecting the health of Toronto residents.

The dental benefits and safety of fluoridation of drinking water are strongly supported by many health organizations, including the Ontario Medical Association, the Canadian Dental Association, the Ontario Dental Association, the American Dental Association, the Public Health Dentists Association, the Chief Dentist of Canada and the International Association for Dental Research.

Fluoride has been added to the Toronto drinking water supply since 1963. Studies of Toronto children 12 years after the introduction of water fluoridation and again in 2000 show that by 2000, there was a 77.4% mean reduction in decayed, missing and filled baby teeth for five year-old children. There was also a 390% increase in the percentage of children with no tooth decay when compared to rates reported prior to the addition of fluoride in 1963.

This dramatic improvement in dental health is due to a combination of water fluoridation, other sources of fluoride (such as toothpaste), better nutrition and better dental preventive care. Water fluoridation plays an important role in a comprehensive approach to good dental health.

The current target level of fluoride in Toronto drinking water is 0.6 parts per million - a level which is less than the naturally occurring fluoride levels from a number of European and North American water sources, including parts of Ontario.

Fluoride levels in Toronto's drinking water are regulated in Ontario under the [Safe Drinking Water Act](#) administered by the Ministry of the Environment.

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Toronto Public Health will continue to monitor expert reviews and recommendations on water fluoridation from provincial, federal and international health research organizations to ensure Toronto residents continue to have appropriate levels of fluoride in drinking water.

For more information:

World Health Organization, (WHO)

[http://www.who.int/oral\\_health/events/oral%20healthc.pdf](http://www.who.int/oral_health/events/oral%20healthc.pdf).

Health Canada

<http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/ahc-asc/branch-dirgen/fnihb-dgspni/ocdo-bdc/project-eng.php#a6>.

<http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/ewh-semt/pubs/water-eau/2008-fluoride-fluorure/index-eng.php>

Chief Medical Officer of Health (Ontario) (CMOH)

<http://www.mhp.gov.on.ca/en/healthy-communities/dental/CMOH-on-Fluoridation.pdf>.

Ontario Medical Association

<https://www.oma.org/Mediaroom/PressReleases/Pages/OntariosDoctorsSetTheRecordStraightOnFlourideInDrinkingWater.aspx>.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

<http://www.cdc.gov/fluoridation/benefits.htm>.

Ontario Dental Association

<http://www.youroralhealth.ca/community-water-fluoridation.html>.

Canadian Dental Association

[http://www.cda-adc.ca/files/position\\_statements/Fluorides-English-2010-06-08.pdf](http://www.cda-adc.ca/files/position_statements/Fluorides-English-2010-06-08.pdf).

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