

Water Fluoridation in Coffs Harbour

On August 6, 2004, after weeks of careful review following referral to an expert committee, NSW Health approved the addition of fluoride to the local water supply.

At present, Coffs Harbour is one of four Councils on the NSW Mid North Coast whose community does not benefit from fluoridated tap water. By around November 2005, in an effort to significantly reduce the occurrences of tooth decay in our community, Coffs Harbour Council will join many other NSW cities currently providing 90 per cent of the population with fluoridated water.



FLUORIDATION FACTS

- ▶ Most importantly, all Australian health ministers and health departments endorse fluoridation of water supplies. Water fluoridation is a safe and effective community health measure that benefits both children and adults.
- ▶ It is the success of water fluoridation, first used in an Australian public water supply in 1953, that led to the development and wide use of fluoride-containing products such as toothpaste, mouth rinse, and dietary supplements.
- ▶ All capital cities, apart from Brisbane, fluoridate their drinking water supplies. Water fluoridation is the least expensive and most effective way to reduce tooth decay and reduce the need for dental treatment and its costs.
- ▶ Water fluoridation has played an important role in the reduction of tooth decay (40-70%) in children and of tooth loss (40-60%) in adults.
- ▶ Water fluoridation is listed by the US Centres for Disease Control and the US Surgeon General as one of the top ten greatest public health achievements of the 20th century.
- ▶ It is endorsed by the World Health Organisation.



FLUORIDATED WATER in Coffs Harbour

What's In It For You



▶▶▶ FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

▶ Is water fluoridation safe?



As with other nutrients, fluoride is safe and effective when used and consumed properly. More than 50 years of evidence from 13 million Australians and nearly 60 other countries supports the effectiveness of fluoridated water and its ability to inhibit, reduce, or even reverse the onset and development of tooth decay. Through continuous research, drinking optimally

fluoridated water has been scientifically proven to be safe (not toxic) and effective. Healthy teeth and gums are vital for good general health.

▶ What level of fluoride will be added?

Natural fluoride level in Coffs Harbour water is around 0.1 part per million (ppm)*. Water fluoridation will adjust the natural fluoride concentration in Coffs Harbour drinking water to 1.0 ppm, a level recommended for optimal dental health in our climate.



* parts per million, ppm, is equivalent to one cent in \$10,000

▶ What are the benefits to water fluoridation?

Health experts endorse water fluoridation as the single, most effective public health measure to improve oral health.

Water fluoridation can reduce tooth decay.

- Fluoride strengthens tooth enamel.
- Fluoride protects a baby's first teeth.
- Water fluoridation is a cost effective means to improving community dental health.

▶ Who benefits?



The entire community benefits from water fluoridation regardless of a person's age, income, level of education, or ability to get dental care. A concentration of 1.0 ppm of fluoride can reduce the amount of cavities in children's baby teeth by as much as 60% and reduce tooth decay in adults by nearly 35%.

▶ What will water fluoridation save?

Dental savings from fluoridation can be looked at two ways: the savings to the community economy through less absence from work due to oral disease, less pressure on dental clinics and more timely service for patients; and savings to families and individuals for dental costs. These have been estimated to be around \$100 per person per year.

▶ Should my child continue taking fluoride supplements?

Once the water is fluoridated, no. NSW Health recommends that dietary fluoride supplements should not be given to any child who lives or goes to school in a fluoridated water community. However, you should consult your dentist, medical practitioner or pharmacist before making any decisions.



▶ Should my family continue brushing with fluoride toothpaste?



Yes. Fluoridated water is part of a total oral health program. You can get additional protection when you brush with a fluoride toothpaste. You should make sure your young children do not swallow toothpaste.

▶ What about my diet?

Even with fluoridated water, you can further help your teeth by eating well. A balanced and nutritious diet low in sugar is best. By reducing the frequency of sugar intake and restricting it to meals you'll reduce the risk of tooth decay. Remember to check labels for "hidden" sugar in processed foods.

▶ Who supports water fluoridation?

All major national and international health, service and professional organisations endorse or support water fluoridation, here are just some:

- Australian Dental Association (ADA)
- Australian Medical Association (AMA)
- National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC)
- Cancer Council, NSW
- Osteoporosis Australia
- Country Women's Association (CWA)
- NSW Council on Social Services (NCOSS)
- Diabetes Australia, NSW
- World Health Organization (WHO)
- United States Center for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC)
- and many more (visit www.fluoridenow.com)

▶ Where can I find out more about water fluoridation?

Visit the following web sites for more information on community water fluoridation.

- www.ada.org.au (Click on Consumer Information)
- www.fluoridenow.com
- www.cdc.gov
- www.who.int



For more information please contact
Mid North Coast Area Health Service
(02) 6592 9748.
Or visit www.mncahs.health.nsw.gov.au