



# Info Brief

## Advocating for Community Water Fluoridation

PA Coalition for Oral Health supports community water fluoridation as the single most effective public health measure to prevent tooth decay. Since its introduction more than 75 years ago, adjusting the naturally-occurring levels of fluoride to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention-recommended level has dramatically improved the oral health of tens of millions of Americans.

### OUR MISSION

To improve oral health for all Pennsylvanians by uniting stakeholders to advance advocacy, policy, education and innovative approaches

### WHO WE ARE

A diverse group of leaders from across the state from schools of public health, dental organizations, health insurance firms, advocacy groups, philanthropic organizations, state agencies and other champions

### WHAT WE DO

Advancing policies and practices that increase access to oral health services, education, and prevention especially for our most vulnerable Pennsylvanians

**Fluoridated water is safe, effective, economical and, by far, one of the best investments in the commonwealth's oral health.**

Community water fluoridation is simply the adjustment of fluoride that occurs naturally in water to a recommended level to help prevent tooth decay. There are more than 100 international organizations that recognize the public health benefits of fluoridation for preventing tooth decay.

Children and adults in our state suffer from pain, infection, lost teeth, speech problems, and learning difficulties due to tooth decay. We have a crisis in this country with one in four children suffering from tooth pain. It is the most prevalent chronic childhood disease, more common than obesity, asthma, or diabetes. Drinking water with fluoride and proper oral hygiene are two of the simplest ways to prevent dental caries (cavities).

On a community level, water fluoridation is one of the few public health measures that saves more money than it costs. Individually, the lifetime cost of fluoridation is less than the cost of one dental filling.

Fluoride is one of a community's most potent weapons to help fight cavities. Fluoridated water and fluoride dental products are a one-two punch to knock out tooth decay. Water fluoridation is particularly important, especially for those who lack adequate access to dental care. Studies show that community water fluoridation prevents at least one out of every four cavities in children and adults.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention states that water fluoridation is one of 10 great public health achievements of the 20th century. Generations ago, many people lost their teeth by the time they were middle-aged due to decay. Today, thanks to fluoride, more people than ever are keeping their natural teeth throughout their lifetimes.

### Community Water Fluoridation has proven to be:

- The 1st step in ensuring that **all** Pennsylvanians have preventive dental care
- Safe and effective in fighting dental decay
- A money-saving public health measure

PCOH encourages communities to fluoridate their public water systems. Recently, the 18th U.S. Surgeon General, Regina Benjamin, said, "Community water fluoridation is one of the most effective choices communities can make to prevent health problems while actually improving the oral health of their citizens."