

COMMUNITY WATER FLUORIDATION *is one of the ten greatest public health achievements of the 20th Century.*

In April 1999, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention proclaimed community water fluoridation as one of 10 great public health achievements of the 20th century.



Fluoride is nature's cavity fighter and is present naturally in all water sources. Community water fluoridation, which has been around for over 50 years, is simply the process of adjusting the fluoride content of fluoride-deficient water to the recommended level for optimal dental health.

Fluoridation does not involve adding anything to the water that is not already there, since virtually all sources of drinking water in the United States contain some fluoride. It is the 20th-century adaptation of a naturally occurring process. Fluoridation is a form of nutritional supplementation that is not unlike the addition of vitamins to milk, breads and fruit drinks; iodine to table salt; and both vitamins and minerals to breakfast cereals, grains and pastas.

Thanks in large part to community water fluoridation, half of all children ages 5 to 17 have never had a cavity in their permanent teeth. According to the April 2000 *Journal of Dental Research*, the use of fluoride in the past 40 years has been the primary factor in saving some \$40 billion in oral health care costs in the United States.

Nearly 100 national and international organizations recognize the public health benefits of community water fluoridation for preventing dental decay. They include the American Dental Association, World Health Organization, the U.S. Public Health Service, the American Medical Association, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Academy of Family Physicians, the International Association for Dental Research, the National PTA and the American Cancer Society.

Community water fluoridation serves as an example of an excellent public health program. Because the benefits can be readily provided to everyone served by a fluoridated public water system, large groups of people can benefit in a manner that does not discriminate against any group, regardless of age, race, gender, ethnicity, religion, educational status, socioeconomic level or any other demographic categorization. Once fluoridation is initiated, people benefit continuously in a way that requires no special effort.

Nearly 145 million Americans are currently receiving the benefits of optimally fluoridated water (62.2 percent of those 232.5 million residents on central water supplies). Throughout the world, including the United States, fluoridated water (natural and/or adjusted) benefits over 360 million people in more than 60 countries.

Is community water fluoridation safe? Yes. Extensive peer-reviewed scientific research conducted over the past 50 years has shown that fluoridation of public water supplies is a safe and effective way to reduce tooth decay for all community residents. More recent reviews of the safety of water fluoridation include a comprehensive review of the scientific literature by the U.S. Public Health Service in 1991 and the University of York in 2000.

Any additive to public drinking water supplies in California must undergo analyses by a third party. The additives to your drinking water meet the standards established by the American Water Works Association, American National Standards Institute (ANSI), and NSF International. In addition, your water supply is tested regularly for any contaminants to protect your safety.