

National Fluoride Information Centre (NFIC)  
Coupland III Building  
University of Manchester  
Oxford Road  
Manchester  
M13 9PL  
Tel: 0161 2758948

info@fluorideinformation.com  
www.fluorideinformation.com

### IS WATER FLUORIDATION ONLY BENEFICIAL TO CHILDREN?

No, anyone who is susceptible will also benefit. Some adults develop decay and the elderly can have considerable root decay. People who have a lot of tooth wear can also benefit from fluoride strengthening their teeth.

### FURTHER INFORMATION IS AVAILABLE

If you have any more questions on any aspect of fluorides or water fluoridation or wish to find out more about any of the other fluoride uses mentioned in this leaflet then either contact your dentist or NFIC on:

Email: [info@fluorideinformation.com](mailto:info@fluorideinformation.com)  
Web: [www.fluorideinformation.com](http://www.fluorideinformation.com)  
Tel: 0161 275 8948

Published by the National Fluoride Information Centre (NFIC). It is an academically independent unit which provides objective information on all aspects of fluoridation. Based at The University of Manchester, all information is derived from scientific literature and is reviewed by independent scientific experts.

In addition NFIC has also been charged with the task of invigorating fluoride research. This action is undertaken with colleagues at the National Oral Health Unit. ([www.ohu.ac.uk](http://www.ohu.ac.uk)).

All the information contained in this leaflet is based on current and valid scientific research.



# Water Fluoridation *and Children*

*Fluoride:  
Reduces the loss of  
minerals from the enamel  
surface of the tooth and helps  
repair damaged tooth enamel.*

### WHAT IS FLUORIDE?

Fluoride is a mineral which occurs naturally in most water supplies. Fluoride reduces tooth decay in both children and adults.

### WHAT IS TOOTH DECAY?

Tooth decay is caused by acid produced by germs (bacteria), from sugar in food or drinks. The acid attacks the tooth, which results in the loss of mineral from the tooth surface, and this, over time, can lead to the development of decay in teeth.

### HOW DOES FLUORIDE HELP REDUCE TOOTH DECAY?

Current research has shown that fluoridated water can reduce tooth decay in children by up to 50% and in adults up to 30%.

### WHAT IS WATER FLUORIDATION?

Fluoride is a substance found in large quantities in some rocks in the earth's surface, and in low amounts in rivers, the sea and naturally in most water supplies.

### DOES IT WORK?

Five and a half million people in England drink artificially fluoridated water. In these areas the children have among the lowest levels of tooth decay in the country. Recent independent research at the University of York has confirmed the benefits of fluoridation. Fluoridation works best in large towns with a simple water supply and where the children have high amounts of dental decay. People living in Birmingham and Newcastle have been drinking fluoridated water for more than 30 years.

### IS IT REALLY NECESSARY?

It is true that if children had sugary foods and drinks only at mealtimes and brushed their teeth twice a day with a fluoride toothpaste then dental decay would be very much reduced. However, many parents are unable to achieve this. Water fluoridation is a good way to help these children to better dental health.

### IS IT SAFE?

Over 350 million people worldwide drink artificially fluoridated water, some for over 60 years. Another 100 million drink water that naturally contains fluoride at about the right level. Among these people there is no evidence of ill effects on general health.

### ARE THERE ANY RISKS TO CHILDREN?

Some young children drinking fluoridated water while their teeth are forming may develop white spots on their teeth. This is called 'dental fluorosis'.

### HOW CAN I REDUCE THE RISK OF MY CHILD DEVELOPING DENTAL FLUOROSIS?

It is important that young people drinking fluoridated water do not also take fluoride tablets or drops. Parents should also supervise their children when using fluoride toothpaste. Place only a small pea-sized amount of paste on the brush and encourage your child to spit out rather than swallow the paste. Please ask your dentist for further advice.

### DOES MY CHILD STILL NEED TO USE FLUORIDE TOOTHPASTE IF HE/SHE DRINKS FLUORIDATED WATER?

Yes. Research shows that people who drink fluoridated water and also use fluoridated toothpaste have even less decay.

### COULD MY CHILD BE ALLERGIC TO FLUORIDE?

Everyone has small amounts of fluoride in their food and drink. There is no reliable evidence of allergy ever occurring.

### CAN FLUORIDE BE USED IN DIFFERENT WAYS?

Yes. In Europe, Central and South America people use fluoridated salt. Some primary schoolchildren in Britain are given fluoridated milk. Most toothpaste contains fluoride. Some people use fluoride mouth rinse. Dentists can paint teeth with fluoride gels or varnish.

### CAN DRINKING FLUORIDATED WATER BE HARMFUL TO PREGNANT WOMEN?

There is no evidence that drinking fluoridated water during pregnancy has harmful effects on the mother or the unborn child.

### HOW CAN I FIND OUT IF THE WATER FROM MY TAP IS FLUORIDATED?

Ask your Dentist, contact your local Primary Care Trust (see [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)) or water supply company.