

Position Paper

Water Fluoridation

The Santa Cruz County Public Health Commission is committed to the promotion of health. Fluoridation of water is a safe and effective public health measure for promoting health by preventing tooth decay. The Commission believes that it is far better to prevent health problems than to treat them. Dental disease is a major health problem for children in Santa Cruz County, as well as the nation. Children who live in communities with water fluoridation have significantly less dental disease than children who drink non-fluoridated water. Since 1950, the American Dental Association along with the United States Public Health Service has continually endorsed fluoridation of drinking water. Public Health professionals support water fluoridation as the single most effective measure to prevent tooth decay and to improve oral health for a lifetime.

Efforts to prevent water fluoridation are sometimes associated with the issue of freedom of choice. However, over time, many public health measures were mandated for the greater public good, including chlorinating water, pasteurization of milk and the addition of Vitamin D, childhood immunizations, mandatory use of passenger restraints in cars, helmets for children bicycle riders and all motorcycle riders, and restriction of smoking in public places. All of these measures restrict personal freedom and choice to some extent, but they have saved millions of lives and countless public and private dollars over the years. These preventive measures have also added significantly to the quality of life and reduction of pain and suffering. Water fluoridation has the demonstrated ability to do the same.

Fluoridated water in the recommended concentrations poses no threat to health. No charges against the safety and benefits of water fluoridation in the recommended amounts have been substantiated by reliable scientific evidence. Communities across the nation that have fluoridated their water supply have seen improved oral health for their children. Fluoridated water is especially beneficial for poor children who often suffer disproportionately from dental disease. The means to address this problem is available. It would be unfortunate if the great preponderance of scientific evidence about water fluoridation is disregarded in favor of vocal opponents with sincere views but unreliable science.

Passed: February 26, 1998
Reaffirmed: May 24, 2001
