

Improving Oral Health: Community Water Fluoridation

Summary of Community Preventive Services Task Force Recommendation

The Community Preventive Services Task Force (CPSTF) recommends community water fluoridation to reduce dental caries (tooth decay).

Major Findings

- After water fluoridation began, communities saw a median increase of 15 percentage points (based on 11 studies) in the percentage of caries-free children compared to communities without water fluoridation.
- When community water fluoridation was discontinued, an increase in dental caries occurred.
- A systematic review of the economic evidence found that the economic benefit of community water fluoridation is greater than the cost.



What is Community Water Fluoridation?

Community water fluoridation is the controlled adjustment of fluoride in a public water supply to reach an optimal concentration to prevent dental caries among members of the community.

Facts about Dental Caries and Water Fluoridation

Dental caries or cavities, more commonly known as tooth decay, are caused by a breakdown of the enamel. This breakdown is the result of bacteria on teeth that break down foods and produce acid that destroys tooth enamel and results in tooth decay.

- Tooth decay is one of the most common chronic conditions among children in the United States.¹
- The percentage of children and adolescents with untreated tooth decay is twice as high for those from low-income families (25%) compared with children from higher-income households (11%).²

Learn More

Summary of Evidence and Task Force Finding and Full-text Publications

https://www.thecommunityguide.org/findings/dental-caries-cavities-community-water-fluoridation

CDC. Oral Health

www.cdc.gov/oralhealth

CDC, Community Water Fluoridation

https://www.cdc.gov/fluoridation/index.html

Established in 1996 by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the Community Preventive Services Task Force (CPSTF) is an independent, nonfederal panel of public health and prevention experts whose members are appointed by the director of CDC. The CPSTF provides information for a wide range of decision makers on programs, services, and other interventions aimed at improving population health. Although CDC provides administrative, scientific, and technical support for the CPSTF, the recommendations developed are those of the CPSTF and do not undergo review or approval by CDC. Find more information at www.thecommunityguide.org.



¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2016). Children's Oral Health. Retrieved from https://www.cdc.gov/oralhealth/basics/childrens-oral-health/index.htm.

² Dye BA, Xianfen L, Beltrán-Aguilar ED. *Selected Oral Health Indicators in the United States 2005–2008*. NCHS Data Brief, no. 96. Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; 2012.