

Evidence on the Carcinogenicity of Fluoride and its Salts

In 2009, regulators in California selected 38 different chemicals, including fluoride, for potential listing under Proposition 65, a California law that requires all known carcinogens and reproductive toxins to be clearly labeled with a standard Proposition 65 warning. In order to qualify for listing under Proposition 65, the law requires that a chemical must be “clearly shown through scientifically valid testing” to cause cancer.

Fluoride has a long history of safe and effective use, and there is an enormous body of scientific research validating its safety and efficacy. The California Proposition 65 Carcinogen Identification Committee will make a final recommendation as to whether or not to list fluoride as a carcinogen in October 2011. The following frequently asked questions should help answer consumers’ questions related to this issue.

What is fluoride and what does it do?

Fluoride is an ingredient that can be found in oral-care products like toothpastes and rinses as well as in communities’ drinking water. Fluoride helps prevent tooth decay by slowing the breakdown of enamel and speeding up the rebuilding process, called remineralization. Specifically, fluoride allows the tooth enamel to form new crystals that are harder, larger, and more resistant to acid. This is important for maintaining oral health in the long-term. Fluoride is considered safe and a vital public health resource that is effective in the prevention of cavities.

Why is preventing cavities so important?

Prevention of cavities (caries) is the primary way to prevent oral infection, progression of oral health disease, and ultimate prevention of tooth loss.

How long has fluoride been used for cavity prevention in the United States?

Fluoride has a long history of use both in dental products as well as in drinking water. It was first approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration for use in dental products in 1956. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (since 1945), every Surgeon General since the 1950s, and the American Dental Association (for more than 50 years) recognize the public-health benefits of fluoride and endorse its use for cavity prevention. By helping to reduce cavities and tooth decay, fluoride is a significant tool in advancing proper oral healthcare, which has important benefits to an individual’s overall good health.

Is it safe to use toothpaste with fluoride?

Yes. Fluoride in toothpaste is safe and it works. Decades of safe, effective use of fluoride and scientific research demonstrate that it’s safe. Fluoride plays an important role in healthy teeth and cavity prevention. The American Dental Association and its partners strongly support the use of fluorides in professional dental office applications and over-the-counter consumer products such as toothpaste with fluoride. The American Academy of Pediatrics reports that brushing with fluoridated toothpaste is associated with a 24% reduction in decayed, missing, and filled tooth surfaces.

Are there any health risks associated with fluoride?

Fluoride has a long history of safe and effective use, having first been approved by FDA in 1956. There is an enormous body of scientific research validating its safety and efficacy. As with any over-the-counter medicine, consumers should always read and follow the directions on the label. Children under the age of six should be supervised in order to develop good brushing and rinsing habits and to minimize product swallowing.

What is water fluoridation?

Fluoridation is the adjustment of drinking water to increase the level of fluoride present. It was first used in Grand Rapids, Michigan, more than 60 years ago. According to the American Dental Association, “community water fluoridation is the single most effective public health measure to prevent tooth decay.” In addition, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention includes water fluoridation as one of the 20th century’s 10 great public-health achievements. Today, more than 72% of the public water supplies in the United States are fluoridated.

Click [here](#) to check if your local community’s water is fluoridated.

What is the science concerning fluoride exposure and cancer?

There is no conclusive evidence of any link between fluoride exposure and cancer. Additionally, a National Research Council Committee on Fluoride in Drinking Water determined in 2006 that the available animal studies demonstrated no convincing evidence of any association between cancer and fluoride exposure. There also have been several more recent epidemiological human studies that similarly found no scientifically significant link between fluoride and cancer.

What health and government agencies support the use of fluoride?

Fluoride is considered safe and effective, and its use is endorsed by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Office of the Surgeon General of the United States, and the American Dental Association, among others. In addition, the World Health Organization, FDI World Dental Federation, International Association for Dental Research, and others all affirm the effectiveness, cost-effectiveness, and safety of topically applied fluoride, as in oral-care products.