

Water Fluoridation Frequently Asked Questions

The Skyline County Water District will begin supplying fluoridated drinking water in September 2005, when the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission (SFPUC) implements system-wide fluoridation. The majority of communities served by SFPUC already receive optimally fluoridated water. San Francisco and northern Peninsula communities have received fluoridated water for about 50 years.

Q. What is fluoride?

Fluoride is an abundant naturally occurring element found in rocks, soil and fresh and ocean water. Fluoride protects people of all ages against tooth decay. It makes teeth stronger and harder, so they last longer.

Q. Why Fluoridate Drinking Water?

- When fluoride is present in drinking water at optimal levels, it has been shown to dramatically improve oral health by preventing tooth decay.
- The amount of natural fluoride in the SFPUC water sources is not enough to provide oral health benefits. Water fluoridation is the addition of small amounts of fluoride to a water supply to achieve the optimal fluoride level that helps prevent tooth decay.
- Fluoridated water benefits the entire community, children and adults of all ages, especially low-income and underserved populations.
- California law requires larger water distributors to fluoridate the water supply, as funding becomes available.

Q. What should I do when the fluoridation program starts?

You do not need to make any changes to your drinking water habits. Fluoride will not change the taste, smell, or appearance of your drinking water. Health experts advise that if you are taking prescription fluoride supplements, either tablets or drops, you **MUST** stop once you begin receiving fluoridated water.

Q. How much fluoride will be added to my water?

The SFPUC will supplement naturally occurring fluoride in your drinking water to meet the levels recommended by the California Department of Health Services (1 part per million, or 1.0 milligram of fluoride per liter of water). This

level of concentration is recommended by the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

The chemical used by the SFPUC for water fluoridation is suitable for drinking water use. (It complies with the drinking water additives requirements Section 64700, Title 22 of California Code of Regulations and has been **tested and certified as meeting the specifications of American National Standards Institute/National Sanitation Foundation Standard 60.**)

Q. Can you give an example of "parts per million" (ppm)?

One drop of fluoride in one million drops, or 50 liters of water. Because there are 3.78 liters in a gallon, one part per million is also the same as one drop of a substance in about 13.2 gallons of water. It is also the same as one inch in 16 miles; one cent in \$10,000; one ounce of salt out of 62,500 pounds; one ounce of oil out of 7,812.5 gallons.

Q. Is fluoride safe?

Fluoride in levels administered for drinking water is safe for humans and all animals.

Over 50 years of research and experience have shown that fluoridation at optimal levels is safe for people and the environment. Leading scientists and health professionals, numerous professional organizations and governments around the world support community water fluoridation.

Q. If I have a water filter, is it removing the fluoride?

To find out if fluoride is removed, check with the filter manufacturer. However, most water filters do not remove fluoride. The most effective way to remove fluoride from a household supply is by reverse osmosis filtering with up to 80 to 90 percent efficiency. Water distillation systems remove up to 100 percent of fluoride, and bottled water does not generally contain fluoride.

Q. What if my child has been receiving fluoride drops or tablets?

The California Department of Health Services and health professionals recommend that prescription fluoride supplements be stopped if your child lives or goes to school in a community that receives fluoridated water. Please check with the pediatrician or dentist who prescribed the supplements.

Q. What do health professionals say about fluoride?

Health experts endorse water fluoridation as the single, most effective public health measure to improve oral health. Through more than 50 years of extensive research, drinking fluoridated water has been scientifically proven to be safe and effective. The following organizations endorse water fluoridation as an important public health measure for reducing tooth decay.

The American Dental Association (ADA) endorsed fluoridation in 1950, and reaffirmed its endorsement in 1997.

The American Medical Association (AMA) endorsed fluoridation in 1950, and reaffirmed its endorsement in 1996.

The American Water Works Association (AWWA) endorsed fluoridation in 1976, and reaffirmed its endorsement in 1982.

The San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara and Alameda county public health departments have all endorsed the SFPUC water fluoridation program.

The California Department of Health Services has approved the SFPUC fluoridation program.

How can I learn more about water fluoridation?

For information on fluoride in your drinking water, call (650) 851-0529 or visit us on line at www.skylinewtr.org. For health-related information, contact the San Mateo County Department of Public Health (650) 372-8572. For general information on water fluoridation visit the SFPUC on line at www.sfwater.org/fluoride, or call (866) 668-6008.

More information is also available on the following web sites:

American Dental Association,
www.ada.org/public/topics/fluoride/facts

California Department of Health Services,
www.dhs.ca.gov/ps/cdic/cdcb/Medicine/oralhealth/Fluoride/index.htm/

Center for Disease Control,
www.cdc.gov/nohss/guideFL.htm

North Coast Fluoride Information Network,
www.fluorideinfo.org