



let's
talk
Fluoride

Water Fluoridation

It protects teeth
It's safe
It's natural
It's cost-effective
It's fair

What is fluoride?

Fluoride is one of the most common elements on earth. It is found in air, soil, plants, water and lots of foods.

How does fluoride help our teeth?

Fluoride helps to protect our teeth by making them stronger and reducing tooth decay.

What is water fluoridation?

New Zealand water supplies have very low levels of natural fluoride. Water fluoridation is the process of topping up the fluoride to optimal levels to provide protection against tooth decay.

Is all New Zealand drinking water fluoridated?

No. It's a decision for each council and their community. Around 60% of New Zealanders on community water supplies have access to fluoridated water. Nationally water fluoridation has been shown to reduce tooth decay.

Some countries choose not to fluoridate their water.

True. Some parts of the world have high enough levels of natural fluoride in their water so they don't need to boost fluoride content. Other countries have different ways to deliver the benefits of fluoride.

Is water fluoridation safe?

Yes. Many peer reviewed and scientific studies over 60 years have found water fluoridation to be very safe. It is supported by all the following organisations:

World Health Organization

British Medical Association

British Dental Association

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

US Surgeon-General

US National Academy of Sciences

World Dental Federation

UK Royal College of Physicians

**Australian National Health and Medical
Research Association**

New Zealand Ministry of Health

New Zealand Dental Council

Te Ao Marama (NZ Māori Dental Association)

New Zealand Medical Association

Public Health Association

NZ Cancer Society

Plunket

Royal Society of New Zealand

Royal Australasian College of Physicians

....and many more.



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Does fluoride just protect growing teeth?

No. Water fluoridation benefits everyone, from children to adults to older people, especially those most at risk of tooth decay.

Water has spiritual and cultural significance to Māori. Does fluoridation support this?

Yes. Water fluoridation can support the traditional concept of wai ora (the water of life). In fact optimally fluoridated water brings dental health and well being by protecting the life of teeth.

Is water fluoridation expensive?

No. Water fluoridation is very cost-effective. The cost of adding fluoride to water is much less than the cost of fixing decaying teeth.

Does bottled water contain fluoride?

It depends on where the water comes from. If you are not sure, check the label.

Do water filters take out fluoride?

Some do, for example osmosis filters and steam distillers. Carbon filters don't remove fluoride.



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Myths & facts about water fluoridation

Is water fluoridation mass medication?

Fluoride is not a medicine or drug. It occurs naturally in water supplies. All we are doing is topping it up to optimal levels.

Does water fluoridation cause illnesses or diseases, such as bone fractures and cancer?

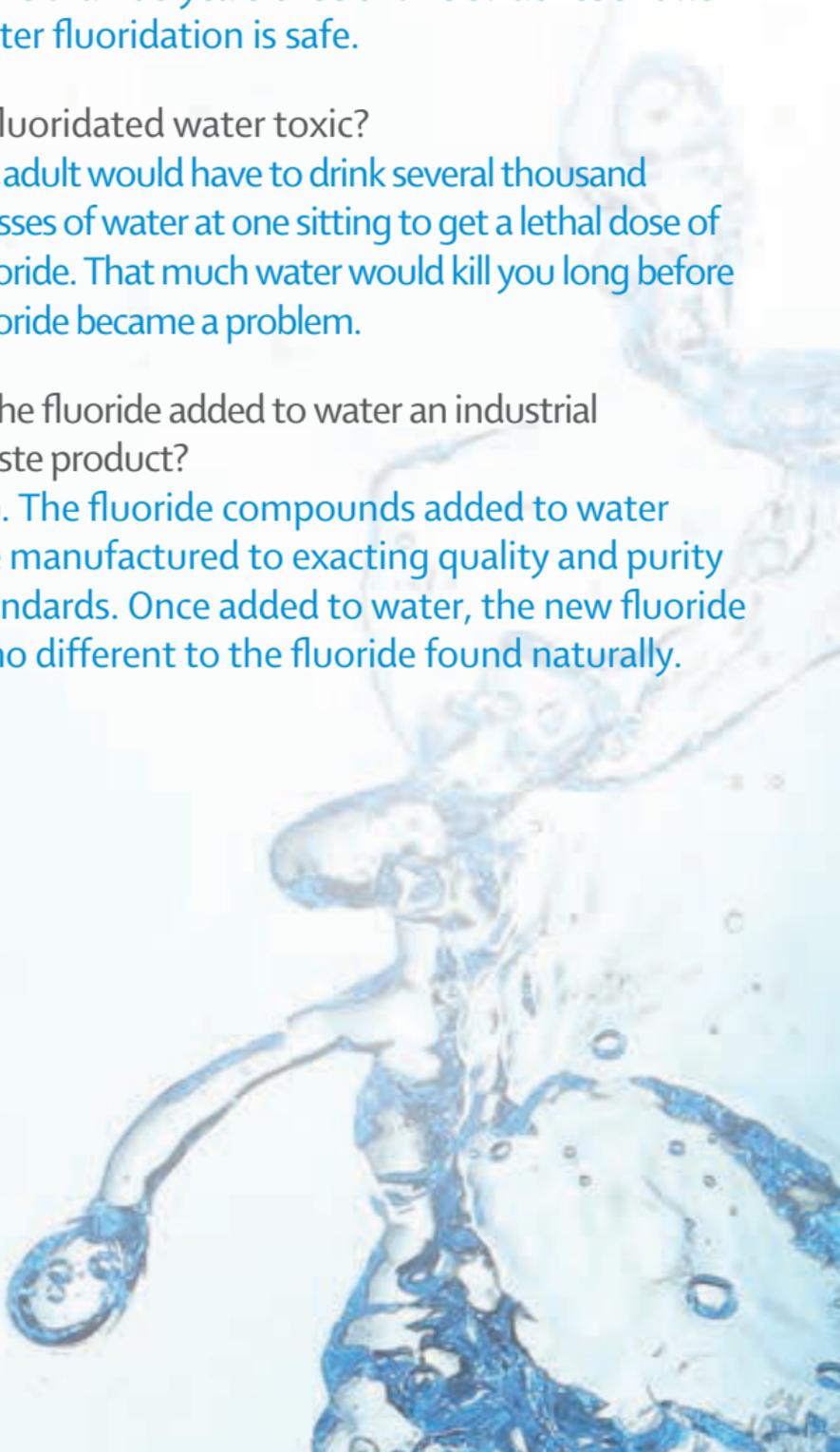
More than 60 years of scientific evidence shows water fluoridation is safe.

Is fluoridated water toxic?

An adult would have to drink several thousand glasses of water at one sitting to get a lethal dose of fluoride. That much water would kill you long before fluoride became a problem.

Is the fluoride added to water an industrial waste product?

No. The fluoride compounds added to water are manufactured to exacting quality and purity standards. Once added to water, the new fluoride is no different to the fluoride found naturally.



Summary

Fluoridation of water to optimal levels is:

Safe – it doesn't cause adverse health effects

Natural – once added to water it's the same as naturally occurring fluoride

Effective – it helps fight tooth decay

Cost-effective – the benefits far outweigh the costs

Fair – it benefits the health of the whole of the community

Talk to your dentist or oral health professional for advice about other fluoride products if your water is not fluoridated.

Further information

www.health.govt.nz/fluoride

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