



Royal College of
Dental Surgeons of Ontario

Ensuring Continued Trust

POLICY STATEMENT

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WATER FLUORIDATION

The Royal College of Dental Surgeons of Ontario (RCDSO) supports the fluoridation of municipal drinking water as an important approach to oral health promotion and disease prevention. RCDSO joins the Canadian Dental Association in affirming its support for fluoridation of municipal water supplies as an economical and effective means of preventing dental caries in all age groups.

BACKGROUND

Fluoride was first added to Canadian drinking water in Brantford, Ontario in 1945. Now more than 50 years later, fluoridation of drinking water is still the most economical means of getting the proven protection that it gives teeth. Although other fluoride-containing products are available, water fluoridation remains the most equitable and cost-effective method of delivering fluoride to all members of most communities, regardless of age, educational attainment or income level, and generally by a method that is not dependent on an individual's behaviour.

Where fluoride has been added to municipal water supplies, there has been a marked decrease in tooth decay rates – between 35% and 50% in children, and 30% in adults. Children need fluoride protection while their teeth are developing. Adults also need it since the possibility of caries on the exposed root surfaces of teeth increases as they get older.

The United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that for every

dollar (US) spent on fluoridation, \$80 (US) is saved on dental care.

Community water fluoridation was hailed in 1999 by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention as one of the 10 great public health achievements of the 20th century.

The Canadian Dental Association (CDA) agrees.

The appropriate uses of fluorides in the prevention of dental caries is one of the most successful preventive health measures in the history of health care.

Nearly 100 national and international organizations and governments endorse the fluoridation of drinking water to prevent dental decay. They include the Canadian Dental Association, the Canadian Public Health Association, the Canadian Medical Association, the Canadian Pediatric Society, Health Canada, the American Dental Association, the International Association for Dental Research, the World Health Organization, and the United States Public Health Service and its Centers for Disease Control.

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Opponents to water fluoridation claim that it increases the risk for a range of health problems from cancer to Down's syndrome. The safety and effectiveness of water fluoridation have been re-evaluated frequently, and no credible evidence supports an association between fluoridation and any of these conditions.

Public exposure to fluoride has been increasing due to the presence of fluoride in food, in beverages, and in personal care products such as toothpaste, fluoride-containing mouthwash, and professionally applied fluoride gels and varnishes. In Ontario, the range for fluoride in

drinking water has recently been adjusted to reduce overall fluoride exposure. This recognizes that appropriate levels of fluoride in treated drinking water are beneficial due to the reduced incidence of dental caries in the population, while avoiding the potential negative effects attributable to excess fluoride exposure in areas where fluoride is added to drinking water.

**Adopted by the RCDSO Council
May 15, 2003**