

98-08

STATEMENT OF POLICY

Community Water Fluoridation

Policy

The National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) recognizes the public health benefits of community water fluoridation for preventing dental decay and encourages communities to fluoridate water supplies to levels optimal for protection against tooth decay.

NACCHO supports the development of policies that address social injustices that contribute to the disproportionate burden of disease among underrepresented, low-income, and socially disadvantaged populations.

Justification

Fluoride is a naturally occurring element, and adjusting the fluoride content of community water supplies is the single most effective and safe public health measure to prevent tooth decay and to improve oral health throughout one's lifespan.¹ Community water fluoridation is a public health measure that benefits individuals of all ages and socioeconomic groups, especially those without access to regular dental care.²

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the World Health Organization recommend the fluoride concentration for all public drinking water be adjusted to between 0.7-1.2 parts per million for effective prevention of tooth decay.³ Recent statistics show that the percentage of the United States population served by public water supplies who receive water with optimal fluoride levels for preventing decay increased from 62 percent in 1992 to 69 percent, or 184 million persons, in 2006.⁴ As of May, 2005, 44 of the 50 largest cities in the United States add measured fluoride in their water supplies.⁵

In the United States, community water fluoridation has been recognized as one of 10 great achievements in public health of the twentieth century. It is an ideal public health method because it is effective, eminently safe, and inexpensive and this method requires no cooperative effort or direct action and does not depend on access or availability of professional services.⁶

The use of water fluoridation continues to be one of the most cost-effective prevention measures to reduce the burden of dental decay in the population. Water fluoridation costs approximately as much as one dental filling per person per lifetime. However, it prevents 50 percent of future tooth decay.⁷ Community water fluoridation is equitable because the entire population benefits regardless of financial resources. Fluoridation helps to lower cost of dental care and dental insurance and helps residents retain their teeth throughout their lifetimes.⁸



Record of Action

Adopted by NACCHO Board of Directors

September 23, 1998

Updated July 29, 2009

1. American Dental Association, ADA Oral Health News in Brief, *Water Fluoridation is Top Public Health Achievement*. (November 1999).
2. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Surgeon General, *Oral Health in America: A Report of the Surgeon General*. (May 2000).
3. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Populations Receiving Optimally Fluoridated Public Drinking Water—United States. 1992-2006. MMWR 2008;57(27):737-741.
4. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Populations Receiving Optimally Fluoridated Public Drinking Water—United States. 1992-2006. MMWR 2008;57(27):737-741.
5. American Dental Association. *Fluoride and Fluoridation, Fluoridation Facts* <http://www.ada.org/public/topics/fluoride/facts-intro.html> (May 2009).
6. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, *Healthy People 2010*. (May 2009).
7. Mason, Jill. *Concepts in Dental Public Health*
8. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, *Healthy People 2010*. (May 2009).