



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

Water Fluoridation Frequently Asked Questions

Q. What is fluoride?

Fluoride is the electrically charged atom (or “ion”) that makes up the naturally occurring element fluorine. Although fluoride comes from fluorine, its properties are very different, just like chloride in common table salt is very different from chlorine. Most sources of drinking water contain some naturally-occurring fluoride.

Q. What is fluoridation?

Fluoridation is the addition of fluoride to a drinking water supply so that it contains the level recommended for optimal protection against tooth decay.

Q. Why is the City of San Diego fluoridating its water supplies?

California state law requires water agencies with more than 10,000 water service connections (which includes the City of San Diego) fluoridate their drinking water supplies. However, a public water system is exempt from fluoridating until sufficient outside funding is available. Both the California Attorney General and the City Attorney's Office opined that when sufficient funding became available, San Diego Municipal Code Section 67.0101, which prohibits the City from fluoridation, would be preempted by state law. In June 2008, the San Diego City Council accepted an offer of funding from the First 5 Commission of San Diego County for the purpose of fluoridating the City's public water supply.

Q. How much fluoride is in my drinking water?

The California Department of Public Health has adopted regulations that establish standards for addition of fluoride to drinking water. According to those standards, any public water agency that fluoridates its water supply must maintain fluoride levels within the control range that has been established for its climate. Fluoridation levels in San Diego average about 0.7 to 0.8 mg/L in treated water.

Q. What chemical is San Diego using to fluoridate its supplies?

While there are three chemicals commonly used to fluoridate municipal drinking water, San Diego selected fluorosilicic acid as the most cost-effective bulk chemical to be used in the district's treatment processes. The appropriate state drinking water authorities must approve all drinking water additives. San Diego's use of fluorosilicic acid was approved by the California Department of Public Health

Q. Should I or my children take fluoride supplements?

Customers currently using fluoride supplements are advised to consult their pediatrician, family physician, or dentist about taking fluoride supplements.

Q. Should I give fluoridated water to my infant?

Parents and caregivers should consult their pediatrician, family physician, or dentist on the most appropriate water to use in their area to reconstitute infant formula. Since some children may have special medical needs, ask your pediatrician or physician whether fluoridated water should be used in the makeup of baby formula or whether your children should be taking fluoride supplements, drops or tablets.

Q. Will fluoridated water harm my pets?

No evidence exists that indicates fluoridated water at the levels prescribed for human consumption is harmful to animals or pets.

Q. I have a fish tank. Will fluoridation affect my fish?

A. No. Fluoridated water will have no affect on the fish in your aquarium.

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