Costs and Savings

Studies continue to show that community water fluoridation prevents cavities and saves money, both for families and the health care system.

- Cost of fluoridation depends on the size of the community and the amount of fluoride added to the water supply. In one study, the median cost per person per year ranged from $2.70 among 19 systems serving <5000 people to $0.40 among 35 systems serving ≥20,000 people.¹
- The results of the National Preventive Dentistry Demonstration Program study found that water fluoridation was the most cost effective means of reducing tooth decay in children. It prevented as much tooth decay as a dental sealant program. In contrast to the $23 per year cost of maintaining a child in a sealant program, the annual per capita cost (in 1981 dollars) of water fluoridation in five United States communities ranged from $0.06 in Denver, Colorado to $0.80 in rural West Virginia.²
- Fluoride tablets and drops, rinses and toothpastes, are more expensive and less effective than the fluoridation of drinking water.³
- Every dollar spent on fluoridation on average saves $38 in avoided dental bills. Over a lifetime the cost of fluoridation is typically less than the cost of one dental filling.⁴
- The difference in treatment costs per Medicaid-eligible child residing in parishes in Louisiana with community water fluoridation (F) compared with those residing in parishes without fluoridation (NF) ranged from $14.68 for 1-year-olds to $58.91 for 3-year-olds; at all ages, costs were higher in NF than in F parishes. In 1995-1996, the mean difference in treatment costs per eligible preschooler was $36.28 (95% confidence interval=$9.69-$62.87).⁵
- A study found that the annual savings associated with fluoridation in Colorado was $148.9 million (credible range, $115.1 million to $187.2 million) in 2003, or an average of $60.78 per person (credible range, $46.97 to $76.41).⁶
- Recently, an increase in the cost of fluoride chemicals has been reported. It still costs much less to fluoridate, when compared to the costs for dental fillings for a single tooth over a lifetime because the cost of fillings has also increased. This is further compounded, by the need to restore and maintain fillings. On an average, fillings are expected to last about 12 years.
References


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