



"...one of ten great public health achievements of the twentieth century."¹



Benefits

Why is oral health a public health issue?

Oral health is integral to general health.² Although preventable, tooth decay is a chronic disease affecting all age groups. In fact, tooth decay is the most common chronic disease of childhood.² It is a greater problem for those who have limited access to prevention and treatment services. Left untreated, tooth decay can cause pain and tooth loss. Infection originating from teeth can lead to abscesses and spread to distant sites of the body like the brain. Among children, untreated decay has been associated with difficulty in eating, sleeping, learning, and proper nutrition.² An estimated 51 million school hours are lost due to cavities. Almost one fifth of all health care expenditures in children are related to dental care.² Among adults, untreated decay and tooth loss can also have negative effects on an individual's self-esteem and employability.

In the U.S., tooth decay⁴ affects:

- ✓ 1 in 4 children aged 2-5
- ✓ 1 in 2 school children
- ✓ 2 of 3 adolescents
- ✓ 9 of 10 adults

Tooth decay may lead to:

- ✓ Abscess and extreme pain
- ✓ Blood infection that can spread
- ✓ Difficulty in chewing
- ✓ Poor weight gain
- ✓ School absences
- ✓ Crooked teeth

What are the benefits of fluoridation?

Fluoride added to community drinking water to reach a concentration of 0.7 to 1.2 parts per million (0.7 to 1.2 milligrams per liter of water) has repeatedly been shown to be an effective method of preventing tooth decay.³ Because community water fluoridation benefits everyone in the community, regardless of age and socioeconomic status, fluoridation provides protection against tooth decay in populations with limited access to prevention and treatment services. The Task Force on Community Preventive Services, a national independent, nonfederal, multidisciplinary task force appointed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), conducted a systematic review of studies of community water fluoridation. They found that, in communities that initiated fluoridation, the decrease in childhood tooth decay was almost 30% over 3–12 years of follow-up.³ Stopping fluoridation was associated with an increase in tooth decay.

Is New York State reaching its Healthy People 2010 objectives?

Healthy People 2010 is a statement of national health objectives designed to identify the most significant preventable threats to health and to establish national goals to reduce these threats. It is designed to achieve two overarching goals: (1) increase quality and years of healthy life and (2) eliminate health disparities among different segments of the population. Because of the effectiveness of water fluoridation in preventing tooth decay, the Healthy People program has objectives specific to water

fluoridation.⁵ Listed below are three of those related objectives and the status in New York State regarding each objective.

Objective 1: Increase the percentage of persons on public water receiving fluoridated water to 75%.
Status: New York State is near this objective as 70% of the population on public water receives fluoridated water.

Objective 2: Reduce the percentage of adults 65+ (65 years and older) who have lost all their teeth to 20%.

Status: New York State has reached this objective as only about 17% percent of New York State's 65+ population had lost all of their permanent teeth.⁴

Objective 3: Reduce the percentage of 3rd grade children with tooth decay to 42%.

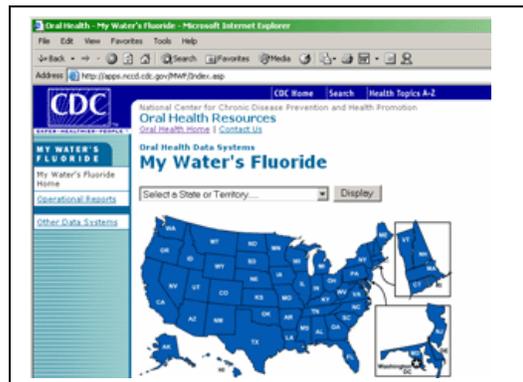
Status: New York State has to make progress to reach this objective as approximately 54% of 3rd grade children had experienced tooth decay.⁶ Furthermore, the disparity between higher and lower income children are noticeable.

How can the public know if a community water system is fluoridated?

Fluoride information is included in the annual water quality report that is sent to all consumers. This information can also be found at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's web page called **My Water's Fluoride**. The web address is: <http://apps.nccd.cdc.gov/MWF/Index.asp> or go to <http://www.cdc.gov/> Click on Health Promotion, Oral Health, then My Water's Fluoride.

The web page displays a map of the U.S. Just click on New York State, then the county and locate the water supply by name. Information that is available:

Water System Name
PWS ID #
Population Served
Water Source
Is it Fluoridated?
Optimal Fluoride Concentration
Date Fluoridation Started
Contact Information



References

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6. New York State Department of Health. Bureau of Dental Health. The Impact of Oral Disease in New York State. December 2006.

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