



MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF  
**HEALTH &  
SENIOR SERVICES**  
Office of Dental Health  
[oralhealth.mo.gov](http://oralhealth.mo.gov)

# Let's Talk About Water Fluoridation...

The Missouri Department of Health & Senior Services - Office of Dental Health supports water fluoridation as the single most effective public health measure to prevent tooth decay. Since its introduction nearly 80 years ago, adjusting the naturally-occurring levels of fluoride to the recommended Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) level has dramatically improved the oral health of tens of millions of Americans. In Missouri, the decision of adjusting the level of fluoride in water supplies is up to individual communities.

## What You Might Hear

"Adding fluoride to water is like forcing people to take medication."

"Studies show that fluoride is linked to lower IQ scores in children and can cause cancer."

"Fluoridation is a 'freedom of choice' issue."

"Other countries don't adjust fluoride in their water and are doing fine."

"We already get fluoride from toothpaste and too much is dangerous."

"The federal government may ban fluoride in water."

## What You Should Know

**Fluoride is a natural mineral and not a medication. Water with added fluoride is similar to adding iodine to salt, vitamin D to milk, calcium to orange juice, and folic acid to bread.**

**Thousands of scientific studies and nearly 80 years of experience prove fluoridation is safe and effective. The amount of fluoride used in America's water is safe and regulated and doesn't lead to bad side effects. Studies around lowered IQ did not show fluoride as a cause and examined fluoride at levels more than twice the limit used in water in the United States.**

**Fluoride exists naturally in water, so it isn't a question of choosing, but making sure people receive the right amount. Public health decisions are made based on what benefits the entire community. Individuals can use filters to remove fluoride from tap water if that's what they want to do.**

**Other countries that may not fluoridate their water offer fluoride in other products, like milk and salt. They also provide free and accessible dental care and nutritious meals which means they have less cavities. Removing fluoride needs to come with other plans to make sure everyone has good oral health, including a dentist that they can afford to see regularly, and healthy, affordable food options.**

**Too much of anything can be unsafe. Fluoride levels in water and toothpaste are carefully monitored and regulated. Fluoride in toothpaste and water work in different ways to keep teeth healthy — much like seatbelts and airbags work together.**

**In Missouri, each public water system makes its own decision on whether or not they will adjust the natural level of fluoride in the water they provide to their customers. Recent court decisions you may have heard about in the news were based on fluoride levels much higher than what is used in drinking water.**