



Association of State and Territorial Dental Directors

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July 2, 2013

Stephen Lawrence,
Mayor, City of The Dalles
c/o City of The Dalles, City Hall
313 Court Street
The Dalles, OR 97058

Dear Mayor Lawrence:

On behalf of the Association of the Association of State and Territorial Dental Directors (ASTDD), I am writing you to reject efforts to discontinue the fluoridation of community water fluoridation in The Dalles, a proven prevention strategy that has been implemented in the The Dalles since 1956. ASTDD's official policy is that we fully support and endorse community water fluoridation in all public water systems throughout the United States.

Dental caries (tooth decay) is a chronic, progressive, multi-factorial, infectious disease that can begin in early infancy and that, by the time children reach adulthood, will affect over 92 percent of the U.S. adult population.¹ In addition, dental caries is highly related to socio-environmental determinants, with the greatest burden on disadvantaged and socially-marginalized populations.^{2,3} Children from families with low incomes had nearly 12 times as many restricted-activity days (e.g., days of missed school) because of dental problems as did children from families with higher incomes.⁴

Since epidemiologic, environmental and laboratory studies confirmed the association between naturally-occurring optimal levels of fluoride in water supplies, improved dental health and absence of any negative health impacts, community water fluoridation has been the cornerstone of caries prevention in the United States.⁵ Community water fluoridation has been demonstrated to be safe, cost-effective and beneficial through every stage of life and for all people, regardless of age, race, ethnicity or socioeconomic status. The CDC has recognized water fluoridation as one of ten great public health achievements of the twentieth century.⁶

In light of the above, I urge you to reject efforts to discontinue the fluoridation of community water fluoridation in The Dalles, This will be a major achievement that will positively impact the health of your constituents.

Sincerely,

Harold Goodman, DMD, MPH
President, ASTDD

Sources:

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ASTDD is an affiliate of the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials

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⁵ Pollick HF. Water fluoridation and the environment: current perspective in the United States. *Int. J Occup Environ Health.* 2004;10:343-350.

⁶ Ten Great Public Health Achievements—United States, 1900-1999. *MMWR.* December 24, 1999;48(50):1141.



American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry

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July 3, 2013

Stephen Lawrence,
Mayor, City of The Dalles
c/o City of The Dalles, City Hall
313 Court Street
The Dalles, OR 97058

Dear Mayor Lawrence:

On behalf of the 8,400 members of the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry (AAPD)ⁱ, we would like to state our endorsement of fluoridated water for the prevention of caries. Our organization strongly believes that fluoride has a significantly beneficial effect on the oral health of children. We also believe that all children deserve a healthy start in life and that every effort should be made to improve access to resources which can improve health outcomes, particularly for those children who suffer from health disparities. One very important resource is optimally fluoridated water. The purpose of this letter is to reiterate the benefits of community water fluoridation.

In a 2000 report *Oral Health in America*, the Surgeon General noted that dental caries the most common chronic disease of childhood. Poor dental health damages children, affecting their development, school performance and behavior. Children with poor oral health suffer from "lower life expectancy, decreased quality of life, loss of economic opportunities, and perceptions of injustice."ⁱⁱ Associations have been found between oral infections and diabetes, heart disease, stroke, and low-birth weight babies. In extreme cases, poor dental health and its treatment can lead to serious disability and even death.

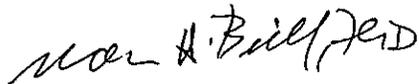
Water fluoridation is the most beneficial and inexpensive method of reducing the occurrence of dental disease. The AAPD policy on the use of fluoride affirms that fluoride is a safe and effective adjunct in reducing the risk of caries and reversing enamel demineralization and encourages public health officials, health care providers, and parents/ caregivers to optimize fluoride exposure. Prospective field trials of water fluoridation in four pairs of treatment and control cities in the United States and Canada, begun in 1945, resulted in a 50% to 75% reduction in caries in children in the fluoridated communities.ⁱⁱⁱ This is notably beneficial to those populations who are most at-risk for dental caries as community water fluoridation makes optimally fluoridated water accessible to the entire community, regardless of socio-economic status, racial or ethnic background or knowledge of good oral practices.^{iv}

This universal access to fluoridated water is particularly important in light of the findings of the Surgeon General's Report on Oral Health which identified

disparities that negatively affect the oral health of those without the knowledge or resources to achieve good oral care. Those who suffer the worst oral health include poor Americans, especially children and the elderly. Members of racial and ethnic groups also experience a disproportionate level of oral health problems.^v

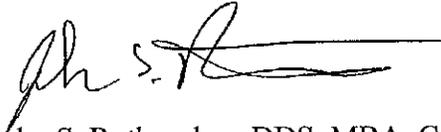
In sum, the AAPD strongly urges you to support community water fluoridation to support optimal oral health.

Sincerely yours,



Warren A. Brill, DMD, MS(HYG)
President

cc: Dalles City Council
Dalles City Manager.



John S. Rutkauskas, DDS, MBA, CAE
Chief Executive Officer

ⁱ Founded in 1947, the **American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry (AAPD)** is a not-for-profit membership association representing the specialty of pediatric dentistry. The AAPD's 7,800 members are primary oral health care providers who offer comprehensive specialty treatment for millions of infants, children, adolescents, and individuals with special health care needs. The AAPD also represents general dentists who treat a significant number of children in their practices. As advocates for children's oral health, the AAPD develops and promotes evidence-based policies and guidelines, fosters research, contributes to scholarly work concerning pediatric oral health, and educates health care providers, policymakers, and the public on ways to improve children's oral health. For further information, please visit the AAPD Web site at www.aapd.org.

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ⁱⁱⁱ Milgrom, P, Reisine, S. Oral health in the United States: the post-fluoride generation. *Ann Rev Public Health 2000;21:403-36.*

^{iv} Horowitz, HS. The effectiveness of community water fluoridation in the United States. *J Public Health Dent 1996; 56(5)(spec Iss):253-8.*

^v US Department of Health and Human Services. Oral health in America: a report of the Surgeon General. Rockville, MD: US Department of Health and Human Services, National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research, National Institutes of Health; 2000.



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July 2, 2013

Mayor Stephen Lawrence
City Hall
313 Court Street
The Dalles, OR 97058

Dear Mayor Lawrence:

I write on behalf of the Pew children's dental campaign to share information about water fluoridation as you explore this topic in your community.

Having worked with many lawmakers and experts committed to dental health for children, we welcome the opportunity to provide you with information that we hope will be of use to you in your deliberations. Untreated tooth decay can undermine children's ability to eat, sleep, grow, and learn.¹ A 2011 study found that schoolchildren with oral health problems are more likely to miss class and perform poorly.² A 2012 study revealed that teens with toothaches were four times more likely to have a low grade point average than their peers.³

Fluoridation benefits people of all ages, including adults.⁴ Seniors benefit from fluoridation partly because it helps prevent decay on the exposed root surfaces of teeth—a condition that especially affects older adults.⁵ In fact, the Florida Department of Elder Affairs has noted:

"Because older Americans are now keeping their teeth longer, fluoride will continue to be even more important for preventing tooth decay in this age group. Older Americans are especially susceptible to tooth decay because of exposed root surfaces and mouth dryness that may result from many of the medications they might be using to treat certain chronic conditions."⁶

Fluoridation reduces the incidence of decay by about 25 percent over a person's lifetime.⁷ As you may know, fluoride is a mineral that exists naturally in water.⁸ Fluoridation is simply the process of adjusting fluoride to the optimal level that prevents tooth decay. Fluoride counteracts tooth decay and strengthens teeth by fighting harmful acids and drawing calcium back into the enamel. Drinking water is an ideal vehicle for fluoride because it offers these benefits without requiring families to spend extra money or change their routine. At a time when many families lack dental insurance, this form of decay prevention is especially crucial.

Even in an era when fluoride toothpaste is widely used, fluoridated water still provides critical, added protection. Research from the past few years demonstrates this benefit:

- Within the past three years, studies in Alaska and New York have demonstrated that fluoridated water helps to protect teeth from decay.⁹ The Alaska study revealed that children living in non-fluoridated areas had a 32 percent higher rate of decayed, missing or filled teeth than kids in fluoridated communities.

- A 2010 Nevada study examined teenagers' oral health and found that living in a non-fluoridated community was one of the top three factors associated with high rates of decay.¹⁰
- A 1998 study of communities in Illinois and Nebraska found that children in the fluoridated town had a tooth decay rate that was 45 percent lower than the rate among kids in the non-fluoridated communities. This benefit occurred even though the vast majority of children in *all* of these communities were using fluoridated toothpaste.¹¹

The American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Dental Association, the Institute of Medicine and many other respected medical and health organizations support fluoridation.¹² The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has praised water fluoridation as one of "10 great public health achievements of the 20th century."¹³ The American Water Works Association points out that "water providers undergo thorough and extensive training to safely apply fluoride in the amount recommended by the world's most respected public health authorities."¹⁴

Compare these credible, science-based sources with the kinds of assertions that anti-fluoride groups make. For example, some claim that the fluoride added to water is a "toxic" waste by-product, but the evidence does not back them up. First, all fluoride additives are required to meet strict quality and safety standards.¹⁵ Second, PolitiFact—an independent fact-checking service—investigated the "toxic" claim and two other common arguments used by anti-fluoride activists. PolitiFact found that each one of these claims was deceptive.¹⁶

Many of the studies cited by anti-fluoride groups were conducted in other nations under conditions that do not reflect how water is fluoridated in the United States.

For example, anti-fluoride groups claim that fluoride causes lower IQ scores in children, but many of the studies they cite were from areas in China, Mongolia and Iran in which the *natural* fluoride levels were at least four or five times higher than the level used to fluoridate water in The Dalles. One study included fluoride levels that reached as high as 11.5 milligrams per liter—a concentration that is roughly 10 times higher than the level that is used to fluoridate American communities. In addition, the Harvard researchers who examined these IQ studies found that each of the studies "had deficiencies, in some cases rather serious, which limit the conclusions that can be drawn."¹⁷ Furthermore, the Harvard researchers publicly distanced themselves from the way that anti-fluoride groups were misrepresenting these IQ studies.¹⁸ Anti-fluoride groups also ignore historical evidence that undermines their claim—between the 1940s and the 1990s, the average IQ scores of Americans improved 15 points while fluoridation steadily expanded to serve millions of additional people.¹⁹

As the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention notes, "For many years, panels of experts from different health and scientific fields have provided strong evidence that water fluoridation is safe and effective."²⁰ Residents of St. Louis, Denver, Chicago, and many other U.S. cities have consumed fluoridated water for more than 50 years. If the safety concerns raised by anti-fluoride groups were valid, researchers would likely have seen ample evidence of it by now.

In these tough fiscal times, cities and states are increasingly looking for ways to save money. Research shows that water fluoridation offers perhaps the greatest return-on-investment of any public health strategy. By reducing the need for fillings and tooth extractions, fluoridation saves money for families and taxpayers. Consider these facts:

- For most cities, every \$1 invested in water fluoridation saves \$38 by reducing the need for fillings and other dental treatments.²¹
- A Texas study in 2000 confirmed that the state saved \$24 per child, per year in Medicaid expenditures because of the cavities that were prevented by fluoridated water.²²
- A 2003 study estimated that Fort Collins, Colorado—which then had a population of nearly 101,000—saved about \$429,000 each year by fluoridating its water.²³ Researchers estimated that in the same year, Colorado saved nearly \$149 million in unnecessary health costs by fluoridating public water supplies: an average savings of roughly \$61 per person.²⁴
- By protecting the enamel of teeth, fluoridation makes it less likely that decay will occur and develop into more serious dental problems that drive people to hospital emergency rooms (ERs)—where treatment is expensive and taxpayers shoulder much of this cost. More than 830,000 Americans were treated in ERs during 2009 for preventable dental conditions.²⁵

It's important that everyone understand the solid scientific evidence that supports fluoridation. More facts about this public health practice are available at www.iLikeMyTeeth.org/fluoridation—a website supported by a coalition of organizations including Pew and the American Academy of Pediatrics.

If you have any questions or need additional information, please feel free to contact me or Pew's Elizabeth Barajas-Román at 202-540-6845 or ebarajasroman@pewtrusts.org. Thank you very much for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Shelly Gehshan, Director
Pew children's dental campaign

Sources:

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