

# Community Water Fluoridation



"...one of the 10 great public health achievements of the twentieth century."<sup>1</sup>



## Oral Health in *Connecticut*: A Fact Sheet

### What is the public health issue?

Oral health is integral to general health.<sup>2</sup> Although preventable, tooth decay is a chronic disease affecting all age groups. In fact, it is the most common chronic disease of childhood.<sup>2</sup> The burden of disease is far worse for those who have limited access to prevention and treatment services. Left untreated, tooth decay can cause pain and tooth loss. Among children, untreated decay has been associated with difficulty in eating, sleeping, learning, and proper nutrition.<sup>3</sup> 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 decay<sup>3</sup> affects:

- ✓ 1 in 4 elementary school children
- ✓ 2 out of 3 adolescents
- ✓ 9 out of 10 adults

### What is the impact of fluoridation?

Fluoride added to community drinking water at a concentration of 0.7 to 1.2 parts per million has repeatedly been shown to be a safe, inexpensive, and extremely effective method of preventing tooth decay.<sup>2</sup> 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 services. In fact, for every dollar spent on community water fluoridation, up to \$42 is saved in treatment costs for tooth decay.<sup>4</sup> The Task Force on Community Preventive Services, a national independent, nonfederal, multidisciplinary task force appointed by the director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), recently conducted a systematic review of studies of community water fluoridation. They found that, in communities that initiated fluoridation, the decrease in childhood decay was almost 30 percent over 3–12 years of follow-up.<sup>3</sup>

### How is Connecticut doing?

In 2007, almost 41% percent of Connecticut's third-graders had experienced tooth decay.<sup>5</sup> In 2004, nearly 12% percent of Connecticut's 65+ population had all of their natural teeth removed.<sup>6</sup> In 2010, 89.8 percent of the population in Connecticut on public water systems received fluoridated water. This translates into 66.8 percent of Connecticut's total population receiving fluoridated water.

#### Related U.S. *Healthy People 2010 Objectives*<sup>7</sup>

- ✓ Increase percentage of persons on public water receiving fluoridated water to 75%
  - In Connecticut, 89.8% of the population on public water receives fluoridated water.
- ✓ Reduce adults 65+ who have lost all their teeth to 20%.
  - In Connecticut, 12% of adults 65+ have lost all of their teeth.
- ✓ Reduce tooth decay experience in children aged 6 to 8 to 42%.
  - In Connecticut, 27.3% of kindergarten children under the age of 9 have experienced tooth decay.
  - In Connecticut, 40.6% of 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students have experienced tooth decay.

## What is Connecticut doing?

### Strategies for Connecticut Future

- ✓ Encourage fluoride supplements for those at increased risk for decay who are not receiving fluoridated drinking water.
- ✓ Develop and use data from well-water testing programs.
- ✓ Continue supporting and funding **Connecticut**'s oral health program.
- ✓ Educate and empower the public regarding the benefits of fluoridation.

## References

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7. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. *Healthy People 2010*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, 2000. <http://www.health.gov/healthypeople>.

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