

### In Summary

In light of a new Cochrane study and the EPA court ruling the American Dental Association does not change its endorsement of community water fluoridation as safe and beneficial to oral health. [Read full statement from 9/25/24.](#)

### About the Case

- Environmental nonprofit Food & Water Watch and anti-fluoride groups like the Fluoride Action Network brought the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to court after their petition to ban water fluoridation was denied by the EPA in 2017.

### About the Ruling

- A federal court ruled on Tuesday, Sept. 24, 2024, against the EPA, ordering the agency take action to further evaluate potential health risks from currently recommended fluoride levels in the U.S. drinking water supply. “Action” is undefined at this point, but examples of potential “action” are labeling notification or regulatory action to adjust the therapeutic level.
- Judge Edward Chen said his ruling does not conclude with certainty that fluoridated water is injurious to public health, but that the evidence of its potential risk is enough to force the EPA to act and that fluoride is hazardous at the therapeutic level of 0.7 parts fluoride per million parts water are too close to U.S. drinking water levels.
- The judge's ruling cites a National Toxicology Program (NTP) review released in August, which concluded that “higher levels” of fluoride are linked to lowered IQ in children.

### About the NTP Report

- The National Toxicology Program’s (NTP) review does not provide any new or conclusive evidence that should compel any changes in current U.S. community water fluoridation practices because it did not find harm associated with the current optimally fluoridated water level of 0.7 parts fluoride per million. The ADA’s official statement on the NTP Report can be found [here](#).
- The studies in the review were conducted outside the U.S. in areas with high levels of naturally-occurring fluoride in water. The NTP acknowledged that studies of fluoride exposure at recommended levels have not reliably demonstrated effects on cognitive development.
- Despite its discussion of the alleged impact of fluoride on IQ, the NTP monograph itself acknowledges the weakness of evidence in its studies and cannot establish fluoride as the cause of affecting IQ.

### About the Effectiveness of Community Water Fluoridation

- Even with the wide-spread availability of fluoride toothpaste, studies show community water fluoridation continues to be effective in reducing tooth decay by about 25 percent in children and adults.
- [Community water fluoridation](#) has been hailed by the Centers for Disease Control as one of 10 great public health achievements of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

- Critics of fluoride in drinking water routinely cite the adoption of fluoride toothpaste and other dental products as evidence that it no longer needs to be added. However, organizations like the CDC state that water fluoridation and fluoride toothpaste work together to help prevent tooth decay and offer more protection against decay than using either one alone.
  - Fluoridated water keeps a low level of fluoride in the mouth throughout the day, while fluoride toothpaste delivers higher concentrations at important times of the day, such as bedtime.

### Cochrane Library Review

- The ADA believes that the review does not present any new or significant findings on water fluoridation's impact to help prevent tooth decay. [Read](#) the latest statement from 10/4/24.
- Dr. Anne-Marie Glenny, co-author of the review said to NBC News, "There's no evidence to suggest that where water fluoridation programs are in place, that they should necessarily be stopped...Contemporary studies are showing that water fluoridation is beneficial."<sup>1</sup>
- The National Fluoridation Advisory Committee (NFAC), an expert committee of the ADA, examined the review and noted important limitations in the findings.
  - There were only a few recent studies on which the review's conclusions are based. Many recent studies that show negative impacts on public health once fluoride is removed from the water supply were excluded.
  - The study's exclusion criteria means that highly relevant research from over the past decade that show significant increases in tooth decay in communities like Juneau, Alaska, Calgary, Canada and other countries after their decision to remove fluoride from water supplies were not included.
  - It's important of interest Cochrane researchers note a significant cost-savings due to fluoridation, which was also not included in the summary. Communities that have fluoridated water save an average of \$32 per person a year by avoiding treatment for cavities according to the CDC.<sup>22</sup>
  - Scientific reviews on decay prevention should have evidence-based methodologies, be complete and impartial when conducting the overall analysis, and use measurements consistent with studies across the globe for clear interpretation of results.
- According to the CDC, water fluoridation and fluoride toothpaste work *together* to help prevent tooth decay and offer more protection against decay than using either one alone.
- The review advises that starting or stopping community water fluoridation requires careful consideration of the current evidence while also considering a population's oral health, diet, and consumption of tap water; movement or migration; and the availability and uptake of other cavity prevention strategies.

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.nbcnews.com/health/health-news/still-need-fluoride-drinking-water-benefits-may-waning-study-suggests-rcna173790>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/oral-health/data-research/facts-stats/fast-facts-community-water-fluoridation.html>