

From: Rich <rlevasse@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, March 10, 2025 12:53:45 PM
To: Melissa Braga <MBraga@tewksbury-ma.gov>
Subject: Fluoride in water

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Richard Levasseur
25 Anthony Rd.
Tewksbury, MA 01876

Tewksbury BOH members,

I am writing to emphasize the significant benefits of fluoride in drinking water and to address some common misconceptions regarding its use. For over 75 years, community water fluoridation has been one of the most effective public health measures for preventing tooth decay, improving oral health, and reducing dental care costs for millions of people. The benefits of fluoridation extend across all age groups and socioeconomic backgrounds, making it an essential component of public health policy.

The Proven Benefits of Fluoride in Drinking Water

1. Prevention of Tooth Decay

Fluoride strengthens tooth enamel, making it more resistant to acid attacks from plaque bacteria and sugars in the mouth. Numerous studies have shown that fluoride in drinking water can reduce cavities by approximately 25% in both children and adults. This protection extends throughout a person's lifetime, reducing the need for expensive dental treatments.

2. Cost Savings for Families and Communities

Water fluoridation is an incredibly cost-effective public health intervention. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), for every dollar spent on water fluoridation, communities save an estimated \$38 in dental treatment costs. By reducing the prevalence of cavities, fluoride helps families avoid costly dental procedures such as fillings, crowns, and even tooth extractions.

3. Health Equity and Accessibility

One of the most significant advantages of water fluoridation is its ability to benefit everyone, regardless of income level or access to dental care. While regular dental visits and fluoride toothpaste are important, not everyone can afford them. Fluoridation ensures that even those with

limited access to dental services receive a basic level of protection against cavities simply by drinking tap water.

4. **Lifelong Benefits for All Age Groups**

Children benefit from fluoride because it helps strengthen developing teeth, reducing their risk of cavities as they grow. Adults and seniors also gain protection, as fluoride can help prevent root decay, common issues among older adults due to gum recession exposing the roots of teeth to decay. Fluoride's protective effects continue throughout life, making it an essential health measure for people of all ages.

5. **Reduced Suffering and Improved Quality of Life**

Dental cavities are more than just an inconvenience—they can lead to significant pain, infections, and complications that affect overall health. Severe tooth decay can impact speech, nutrition, sleep, and even self-esteem, particularly in children. By preventing cavities before they start, fluoride helps individuals maintain healthier, pain-free smiles and avoid unnecessary discomfort.

Addressing Misconceptions About Fluoride

Despite overwhelming scientific evidence supporting the safety and effectiveness of fluoride, some concerns have been raised regarding its use. It is important to separate facts from misinformation:

- **Fluoride Is Safe at Recommended Levels**

Decades of research and reviews by major health organizations—including the CDC, World Health Organization (WHO), and American Dental Association (ADA)—confirm that fluoride in drinking water at recommended levels (0.7 parts per million) is safe. The only potential side effect of excessive fluoride exposure is dental fluorosis, which is generally mild and cosmetic, appearing as faint white spots on teeth. This is rare in communities with properly regulated fluoride levels.

- **No Credible Link to Serious Health Issues**

Some claim that fluoride contributes to conditions such as cancer, neurological disorders, or endocrine issues. However, extensive studies have found no credible link between fluoride at optimal levels and these health concerns. The few studies that suggest negative effects often involve significantly higher fluoride concentrations than those used in public water supplies or lack rigorous scientific methodology.

- **Fluoridation Is Not "Forced Medication"**

Fluoride occurs naturally in water supplies, and community fluoridation simply adjusts it to the optimal level for preventing tooth decay—just as other essential nutrients, such as iron or iodine, are adjusted in food and water for public health benefits. Fluoridation is widely recognized as a preventive measure, not a form of medication.

A Public Health Achievement Worth Defending

The evidence is clear: water fluoridation is a safe, effective, and economical way to improve oral health and overall well-being. It has been recognized as one of the greatest public health achievements of the 20th century and continues to benefit millions of people worldwide. Failing to support fluoride in drinking water

would not only lead to higher rates of tooth decay but also increase healthcare costs and worsen health disparities.

I strongly encourage continued support for water fluoridation in Tewksbury as a proven and essential measure for public health. By protecting smiles and preventing unnecessary dental problems, fluoride plays a critical role in ensuring healthier communities for generations to come.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Richard Lee". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.