



County of Santa Cruz

HEALTH SERVICES AGENCY

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HEALTH BULLETIN

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County Health Services Agency Extols the Benefits of Fluoridation

The Santa Cruz County Health Services Agency announces today the inauguration of their community water fluoridation web site to improve children's failing oral health. The website can be accessed at www.santacruzhealth.org.

The Santa Cruz County Health Services Agency supports community water fluoridation. "We have made a good start on improving children's dental health, but we have some very clear challenges. One area in which we are far behind the rest of the country is in fluoridation of our community water supplies. This is a proven, economical way to reduce cavities among children and provide lifetime protection," says Dr. McNutt, Health Officer for Santa Cruz County.

Tooth decay (cavities) is one of the most prevalent chronic diseases in Santa Cruz County, affecting children and adults of all ages. In dental screenings of over

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10,000 Watsonville school children, 77% had untreated dental disease, compared with just 52% of children in California overall and 26% nationally. The complications of dental decay include pain, infection, tooth loss, reduced chewing ability and absence from work and school. When left untreated, dental decay becomes progressively more severe and more difficult to treat, resulting in much higher costs for restorative dental treatment.

"Fluoridation is the single most cost-effective, efficient, and equitable means of preventing tooth decay in children and adults, regardless of race or income level, and it is one of the easiest public health preventive strategies to implement, " according to Dr. David Nelson of the California Department of Health Services. One of the principal advantages of fluoridation is that it benefits the entire community drinking the water and allows the people who other wise may not have access to a dentist to receive preventive dental benefits.

Fluoridation adjusts the natural level of fluoride found in a community's water supply to a level that prevents tooth decay. While all water in Santa Cruz County contains naturally occurring levels of fluoride, fluoridation adjusts this natural level of fluoride to an optimal level to prevent tooth decay. Research spanning a period of over fifty-five years has shown that fluoridation prevents decay and that this process is completely safe and cost effective.

Today, two-thirds of the American public already benefits from fluoridation. Fluoridation was named as one of the Top 10 public health achievements of the 20th century by the Center for Disease Control.

Fluoridation is endorsed by every major national health organization, including the American Dental Association, the U.S. Public Health Service, the American Medical

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Association, The American Academy of Pediatrics, The American Cancer Society, and the World Health Organization. Fluoridation has been called "one of the 'four pillars' of public health" along with pasteurization of milk, water purification, and immunizations and vaccination.

Dr. McNutt says it best, "Fluoridation alone cannot overcome the other factors that contribute to dental disease, but it is clearly one of the proven means of defense that Santa Cruz County children deserve to have at their disposal."

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