

Fluoridation in Marin County

Does our water contain fluoride?

Yes and No. Most communities in Marin County are fluoridated, but areas in Novato and West Marin are not fluoridated.

Fluoride occurs naturally in almost all surface and ground waters. In most areas of Marin, the natural concentration is 0.1 milligrams per liter. Following a voter initiative in 1972, the fluoride level was increased to 0.9 milligrams per liter, the optimum for cavity prevention. In 1995, the state of California passed legislation requiring all communities with more than 10,000 service connections to fluoridate their water. No money was provided for this and the Department of Health was charged with raising funds. Unfluoridated areas were placed on a list by the state prioritized by the extremity of their need. They raised some money and some fluoridation projects were completed, but the money ran out before Novato and West Marin made it to the top of the list.

The necessary infrastructure for fluoridation is quite expensive and can be difficult politically. Many households in Marin County are serviced by private well water that would not be served by fluoridation projects. Other areas do not serve enough households to and make start up costs prohibitive.

Fluoridation Facts:

- ◆ Fluoridation of drinking water is considered as one of the ten great public health achievements in the 20th century and has been used successfully in the United States for the last 60 years. It is the single most effective way to prevent tooth decay and improve oral health over a lifetime, for both children and adults.
- ◆ To prevent and control dental decay, fluoride is effective and safe.
- ◆ Fluoride is a naturally occurring mineral found in all water sources (lakes, rivers, groundwater and oceans). Community water fluoridation is the process of adjusting the natural fluoride concentration of fluoride-deficient water to a level recommended for optimal oral health.
- ◆ Fluoride protects teeth in two ways—systemically and topically. When ingested by young children, it helps to strengthen their future teeth. But fluoride's main effect occurs after the tooth has erupted above the gum. This effect happens when small amounts of fluoride are maintained in the mouth in saliva and dental plaque (the film that adheres to tooth enamel). In this way, fluoride works by stopping or even reversing the tooth decay process in children and adults. It keeps the tooth enamel strong and solid by preventing the loss of important minerals. This process is similar to fortifying milk with vitamin D, and orange juice with vitamin C.
- ◆ The California Dental Association Foundation strongly supports the fluoridation of community drinking water sources and has successfully facilitated some of the funding for fluoridation, serving more than 26 million Californians. It is recommended that in areas where there is no water fluoridation, parents should speak with their pediatrician's about alternatives to water fluoride for their children, such as fluoride drops or fluoride varnish. It is important to emphasize other options for fluoride may be the best way to reach those most in need in areas of Marin with no water fluoridation.
- ◆ Extensive research over the past 50 years has shown that individuals who drink fluoridated water have fewer dental caries and adding fluoride to drinking water is one of the most cost-effective ways of preventing tooth decay.