



Kansas Public Health Association

- Promoting and Improving Population Health in Kansas

Community Water Fluoridation Prevents Tooth Decay

The Issue:

Tooth decay is common, especially among children. It is chronic, but it is also largely preventable. Good oral health requires a comprehensive approach that includes proper daily home-care, a healthy diet, access to dental services, and access to an optimally fluoridated community water source. Fluoridation works by stopping or even reversing the tooth decay process. Community water fluoridation (CWF) is the most cost-effective and equitable way to protect dental health across socially and economically diverse communities.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention count about 2.7 million Kansans who rely on community water systems, but only 63.8 percent of them receive the benefit of fluoridation. This means that over 1 million Kansans are missing out on this preventive public health intervention.

Tooth decay has declined dramatically in the 70 years since community water fluoridation started, prompting the CDC to call the practice one of the *10 Great Public Health Achievements in the 20th Century*. Surgeon General Vivek H. Murthy joins every surgeon general since 1950 in supporting CWF, stating, "Fluoride's effectiveness in preventing tooth decay extends throughout life, resulting in fewer and less severe cavities. In fact, each generation born since the implementation of water fluoridation has enjoyed better dental health than the preceding generation."

2017 Advocacy Priorities:

- Support new and maintain existing local policies which direct municipal water operators to adjust the fluoride levels in community water systems to the optimal levels to prevent tooth decay.
- Support state and local investment in adequate public health and municipal infrastructure to ensure safe and effective water fluoridation practices. These investments include modern fluoride delivery and monitoring equipment, training for water operators and municipal decision makers, and state health department technical and financial assistance.
- Support state and local policies requiring public notification if community water fluoridation is interrupted or stopped for any reason.