



# FACT SHEET: FLUORIDE

- Urban water utilities supply safe, high quality drinking water to cities and regional towns across Australia.
- Fluoride is a naturally occurring mineral that has been found, through sixty years of research, to prevent or reduce tooth decay when added at the appropriate concentration.
- Australian water suppliers adjust the existing natural levels of fluoride in water to a level that is appropriate to help prevent tooth decay.
- There is no credible evidence that water fluoridation, when undertaken as mandated in Australian state and territories causes health problems.
- The urban water industry supports rigorous scientific research that contributes to the development of robust safety guidelines designed to protect the community's health and wellbeing.

## What is fluoride?

Fluoride is a mineral that is found naturally in our environment in rocks and soils, salt, plants many foods and beverages, and bodies of water. It is also added to toothpastes and other dental products. It is colourless, odourless and tasteless.

## Why is it in our drinking water?

While fluoride occurs naturally in all Australian water supplies, in most places the levels are too low to help prevent or reduce tooth decay.

Australian water suppliers adjust the existing natural levels of fluoride in water supplies to a level that can help prevent tooth decay. This process is called water fluoridation and has been happening across Australia since the 1950s.

In some communities in Australia there are already sufficient levels of fluoride naturally occurring in the groundwater. In these places water suppliers do not add fluoride to the water supply.

The National Health and Medical Research Council (NHRMC) has found that drinking fluoridated water reduces tooth decay in Australian children, teenagers and adults by between 26-44%.



Leading Australian and international health, medical and dental organisations, and all health departments at all levels of government strongly endorse water fluoridation. It is backed up by over 60 years of research.

In Australia, the chemicals used for water fluoridation are subject to safety and quality control measures and are regularly monitored.

Water fluoridation by water utilities is covered in the NHMRC Australian Drinking Water Guidelines. The Guidelines provide over 250 rigorous guidelines for water utilities to follow. In the most recent National Performance Report which assesses compliance against the Guidelines or licence conditions imposed on the utility, water supply quality compliance remained strong and in the majority of cases was 100 per cent.

### **More information**

National Health and Medical Research Council. Information paper—Water fluoridation: dental and other human health outcomes. Canberra, Australia: National Health and Medical Research Council 2017.

<https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/reports/fluoridation-info-paper.pdf>

Australian Drinking Water Guidelines – National Health and Medical Research Council

<https://nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/publications/australian-drinking-water-guidelines>

### **Media inquiries**

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