

## Environmental Health

# Water fluoridation

Community water fluoridation is the controlled adjustment of fluoride in a public water supply to optimal concentration in order to prevent tooth decay (cavities). While fluoride occurs naturally in water, it is usually lower than the optimal concentration. It is an effective and affordable way to protect children, adults and seniors from tooth decay and is recognized as one of the 10 greatest public health achievements of the 20th century.

Community water fluoridation is an evidence-based practice recommended by the Community Preventive Services Task Force, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Association of State and Territorial Dental Directors, and Healthy People 2020 based on strong evidence of effectiveness in reducing dental cavities across populations. After communities fluoridate their water supplies, the percentage of children in the population with at least one cavity decreases by 15%, on average<sup>1</sup>.

Despite strong evidence that water fluoridation is safe and improves oral health, Oregon ranks 48th among U.S. states by proportion of public water systems that are fluoridated (Figure 1).

FIGURE 1

Water Fluoridation in the U.S. & Oregon, 2010–2017						
	2010	2012	2014	2016	2017	2018
<b>Percentage of U.S. population on public water systems receiving fluoridated water</b>	73.9%	74.6%	74.7%	n/a	n/a	n/a
<b>Percentage of Oregon population on public water systems receiving fluoridated water</b>	22.6%	22.6%	22.2%	21.8%	22.0%	21.9%
<b>Oregon fluoridation compared to other states</b>	48th	48th	48th			

Source: CDC Water Fluoridation Reporting System and Oregon Drinking Water Services

<sup>1</sup> The Guide to Community Preventive Services. Preventing Dental Caries: Community Eater Fluoridation. 2013. Retrieved from: [www.thecommunityguide.org/oral/supportingmaterials/RRfluoridation.html](http://www.thecommunityguide.org/oral/supportingmaterials/RRfluoridation.html).

Oregon has the third lowest amount of fluoridation in community water systems, a fact that continues to negatively impact the oral health of all Oregonians. In 2017, the percentage of Oregon's population on public water systems receiving fluoridated water remained steady at 22%. Only 11 of Oregon's 36 counties had one or more fluoridated public water system.

**Additional Resources:** [CDC 2014 Water Fluoridation Statistics](#)

**About the Data:** Data source for national data is the CDC Water Fluoridation Reporting System (as of Dec. 31, 2010, 2012 and 2014). Population estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau are used to calculate the percent of the population served by community water systems with optimally fluoridated water. Data source for Oregon data is from OHA Drinking Water Services online data as of Dec. 31, 2018).

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