



# Frequently Asked Questions About Fluoridation

Beginning in October 2007, the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (MWD) has been adding fluoride to the water it sells to other Southern California water agencies, such as Eastern Municipal Water District (EMWD), to control tooth decay. Following are answers to frequently asked questions:

## **WHAT IS FLUORIDE?**

Fluoride naturally occurs in most water sources. It helps reduce dental cavities by strengthening tooth enamel, making it more difficult for the acid produced by oral bacteria to break down teeth. However, the amount of natural fluoride in water supplies is usually not enough to provide optimum oral health benefits.

## **IS OUR WATER SUPPLY FLUORIDATED?**

A small amount of fluoride exists naturally in our water supply. MWD, which supplies approximately 55 percent of EMWD's drinking water, has been adding fluoride to their water since October 2007.

## **WHY IS FLUORIDE BEING ADDED TO THE WATER SUPPLY?**

Fluoride has been shown to prevent tooth decay. MWD's board first took a serious look fluoridation in 1995 when Governor Pete Wilson signed a new state law conditionally requiring fluoridation of any public water supply with at least 10,000 customers. Because the law did not provide funding for utilities, many water agencies found the cost of fluoridating prohibitive. Although MWD was exempt from conditions of the law, local public health officials encouraged large-scale fluoridation at MWD's treatment plants, and in February 2003, MWD's board adopted a policy to add fluoride. In September 2003, the California Dental Association Foundation, in conjunction with the California Fluoridation 2010 Work Group, provided MWD with \$5.5 million in grant monies to design and construct fluoridation facilities.

## **WILL IT CAUSE THE WATER TO TASTE OR SMELL DIFFERENT?**

Fluoride will not change the taste, odor or appearance of the water.

## **WILL FLUORIDE AFFECT MY HEALTH?**

The state has determined there is no known or expected risk to health at the optimum level for tooth decay prevention. The state follows recommendations from the California Department of Public Health, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the American Dental Association. Naturally occurring fluoride levels in drinking water are limited under California state regulations at a maximum limit of 2.0 parts per million (ppm). EMWD will remain below the maximum regulatory limit at the optimal range of 0.7 to 0.8 ppm. Consult your dentist or doctor regarding health related questions.

## **HOW DO I REMOVE FLUORIDE FROM MY WATER IF I DON'T WANT IT?**

Most water filters do not remove fluoride except for reverse osmosis systems. To find out if fluoride is removed, check with the filter manufacturer. Also, the California Department of Public Health certifies certain reverse osmosis home treatment devices and distillation units for reduction of fluoride.

For a list of state-certified devices, go to [www.nsf.org/Certified/DWTU](http://www.nsf.org/Certified/DWTU).

## **DOES EMWD PAY FOR FLUORIDE REMOVAL SYSTEMS?**

It would be cost prohibitive for EMWD to remove all the fluoride from the water served to our customers.

## **WHERE CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION ABOUT FLUORIDE?**

You may visit our website for additional information at [www.emwd.org](http://www.emwd.org), or contact Amy Mora, EMWD Senior Environmental Compliance Analyst, at (951) 928-3777, ext. 6337 or [moraa@emwd.org](mailto:moraa@emwd.org).

# Eastern Municipal Water District

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