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Questions & Answers

Is my drinking water fluoridated?

Your dentist will want to know

Is fluoride added to my drinking water?

At your next dentist appointment you may be asked, “Is your drinking water fluoridated?” When developing a fluoride treatment plan, your dentist will consider all the ways you might be getting fluoride. This can include the water you drink, food and beverages made with fluoridated water, and fluoridated tooth paste. To protect your teeth from cavities, your dentist will want you to get the “optimum” level of fluoride.

How is fluoride added to drinking water?

Washington State does not require public water systems to add fluoride. If a community chooses to add fluoride to its water, the amount must be kept between 0.8 and 1.3 parts per million. In general, water systems that add fluoride to drinking water try to maintain a level of one part per million.

One easy way to find out if your water system adds fluoride is to ask. But their answer may not be a simple “yes” or “no” because there is more than one way fluoride gets into drinking water. Here is how fluoride can get into your water:

- Your system adds fluoride to the drinking water.
- Your system buys water from a neighboring system that adds fluoride to its drinking water. The water gets to your house through an “intertie” between the two systems.
- Your system blends fluoridated and non-fluoridated water. This blending can affect the amount of fluoride in your drinking water. The only way to know for sure is to test the water at your tap. Testing is available through a certified lab.
- Your drinking water has naturally occurring fluoride. Fluoride is a mineral found in soils that can get into the water. Very little natural fluoride is found in western Washington, but in eastern Washington it is fairly common. Public water systems are required to test to be sure their water doesn’t have too much natural fluoride.



HELPING TO ENSURE SAFE AND RELIABLE DRINKING WATER

What should I tell my dentist?

The more you can share with your dentist about the fluoride levels in your drinking water, the better they can determine your treatment plan.

In most cases, your water system will be able to provide you with information about the fluoride in your water. If your water system is required to provide a yearly Consumer Confidence Report, it will tell you about the quality of your drinking water, including fluoride levels. You can also call your water system to find out what levels of fluoride are in your drinking water.

Another way you or your dentist can get this information is to visit the Internet at:

<http://www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/dw/fluoride.htm>

This Web site has a list of water systems that fluoridate, those that receive fluoridated water through interties, and those that are naturally fluoridated. If your system uses blended water, however, you may not be able to get a clear picture without additional testing.

Washington State Department of Health

General Information: 1-800-521-0323

