Questions & Answers

Fluoride
*Is my drinking water fluoridated?*

**Does my community add fluoride to 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 to drinking water. If a community chooses to add fluoride to its drinking 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.

If you are wondering about fluoride in your drinking water, ask your water system. Understand your water system may not have a simple answer for you. The list below demonstrates how fluoride can get into your drinking 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.
What should I tell my dentist?
The more you can share with your dentist about fluoride levels in your drinking water, the better.

In most cases, your water system will be able to provide you with information about fluoride in your drinking 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 levels of fluoride in your drinking water.

Additional Resources
Another way you or your dentist can get information about fluoridation is to visit our website at http://www.doh.wa.gov/DataandStatisticalReports/EnvironmentalHealth/DrinkingWaterSystemData/FluorideinDrinkingWater.aspx

The website 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.

For more information:
Call your ODW regional office.
   **Eastern Region:** Spokane 509-329-2100
   **Northwest Region:** Kent 253-395-6750
   **Southwest Region:** Tumwater 360-236-3030

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