

FAQ Fluoride in Kentucky



Is it safe to drink fluoridated water?

- Adding fluoride to water at the optimal level of 0.7mg/L is safe and effective. 99.7% of Kentuckians live in communities with optimally fluoridated water, making Kentucky a national leader in water fluoridation.¹
- Research conducted in areas with optimal water fluoridation in the US has found a positive effect on the gut microbiome and a modest improved academic achievement in high school.^{2,5}

If Kentucky is the model state for community water fluoridation, why do we have some of the worst oral health outcomes?

- Higher consumption of soft drinks and sugary foods, smoking, lack of access to dental care, and poor oral hygiene practices have a substantial negative impact on oral health.
- Water fluoridation is a critical preventive measure for many Kentuckians and contributes to greater health equity.⁴ Discontinuing water fluoridation would result in even worse oral health outcomes.

Why should fluoride be in water if people can use fluoridated toothpaste?

- Topical and systemic methods of fluoride delivery protect teeth differently and benefit individuals the most when combined.
- Fluoride in toothpaste or applied at a dental visit is topical and makes teeth already present in the mouth more resistant to decay.
- Fluoridated water works systemically by strengthening children's teeth during development. It also makes tooth loss later in life due to decay less likely.⁵ While children benefit the most from fluoridated water, it aids adults as well because it works topically by remineralizing teeth through its presence in saliva.⁶

Why doesn't Europe have widespread water fluoridation?

- Fluoridated water is not widespread in Europe because water sources are more numerous, which is more logistically complicated.
- In addition to having fluoride rinse programs and comprehensive dental care, Europeans consume fluoridated salt and milk.⁵

Should local water districts decide on water fluoridation?

- Kentucky has over 400 water districts with many sharing water treatment plants. If a water district wants to stop fluoridating water but shares its supply with another district, it will have additional costs and challenges for removal.
- It costs on average less than \$1 per person per year to add fluoride to the water supply, making it a cost-effective public health intervention.⁷

Resources

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3. Warren, J. R., Rumore, G., Kim, S., Grodsky, E., Muller, C., Manly, J. J., & Brickman, A. M. (2025). *Childhood fluoride exposure and cognition across the life course*. *Science Advances*, 11(47). <https://doi.org/10.1126/sciadv.adz0757>
4. Burt B. A. (2002). *Fluoridation and social equity*. *Journal of Public Health Dentistry*, 62(4), 195–200. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1752-7325.2002.tb03445.x>
5. American Academy of Pediatrics. American Academy of Pediatrics. (n.d.). *Fluoride Myths & Facts. I Like My Teeth*. Retrieved Jan 16, 2026, from <https://ilikemyteeth.org/debate-fluoridation/fluoride-myths-facts/>
6. American Dental Association. (2023, June 14). *Fluoride: Topical and systemic supplements*. American Dental Association. <https://www.ada.org/resources/ada-library/oral-health-topics/fluoride-topical-and-systemic-supplements>
7. Harrison, R. (2025, January 21). *The Facts--and Largely Unfounded Fears--of Fluoride*. New York University. <https://www.nyu.edu/about/news-publications/news/2025/january/facts-and-fears-fluoride.html?challenge=d06e90d7-4d8f-4b88-9d8c-10b73beb60f1>

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Kentucky Oral Health Coalition (KOHC) is a member-led coalition to improve the oral health of all people of Kentucky. Our work is to engage partners across the state to create a collaborative oral health network designed to educate parents, activate policymakers, and inspire and engage professionals to create optimal oral health for all. KOHC consists of over 450 members and oral health stakeholders who engage with the Coalition from every region of the Commonwealth.

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