



EPA Rejects Request by Opponents of Water Fluoridation, Cites Failure to Offer "Scientifically Defensible" Evidence

EPA's Decision Is 2nd Time in Four Years that the Agency Has Denied Fluoride Critics' Petitions

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The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has denied a petition filed by fluoridation opponents to prohibit community water systems from adding fluoride to drinking water—a practice that thousands of communities use to reduce the rate of tooth decay. This is the [second time in four years](#) that EPA officials have reviewed and rejected petitions by critics of water fluoridation. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has praised fluoridation as one of 10 “great public health achievements” of the 20th century.

Six anti-fluoride groups filed the petition last year urging the EPA to ban the adding of fluoride to drinking water, citing its alleged “neurotoxic risks.” In [its published response](#), the agency explained that it denied the request “primarily because EPA concluded that the petition has not set forth a scientifically defensible basis to conclude that any persons have suffered neurotoxic harm as a result of exposure to fluoride” through the practice of water fluoridation.

Fluoride is a mineral that exists naturally in water supplies—lakes, rivers, groundwater and the ocean. Thousands of public water systems add more fluoride to reach the optimal level that has been shown to prevent tooth decay. This process is called “community water fluoridation.”

Today, more than 211 million Americans are served by water systems with the optimal level of fluoride. Nearly 12 million Americans are customers of water systems whose natural fluoride levels are at or above the optimal level. Worldwide, fluoridation programs exist in more than 20 nations, including Australia, Brazil, Canada, Ireland, New Zealand and Spain. Fluoridation has been practiced for more than 70 years, and the CDC notes: “Many research studies have proven the safety and benefits of fluoride.”

The EPA’s response cited many flaws behind the arguments made by the anti-fluoride groups that filed this petition. For example:

* Many studies that fluoride critics cite were previously found to “pose a very serious overall risk of bias” because of their methodology or data reporting.

* “The petition ignores a number of basic data quality issues associated with the human studies it relies upon.”

* “The EPA does not believe that the petition has presented a well-founded basis to doubt the health benefits of drinking water.”

* “The petition also does not properly account for the relatively poor quality of the exposure and effects data in the cited human studies ...”

* Many studies submitted by the petitioners lacked “basic information” such as family income levels and the gender of those who participated in these studies.

Dr. Johnny Johnson, president of the American Fluoridation Society (AFS), welcomed the EPA’s decision. “Once again, fluoridation opponents have been caught misreading or misrepresenting the science. We applaud the EPA’s response to this flawed petition,” he added.

“About four weeks ago, a [California father died](#) from an infection that began as a toothache. This tragedy is a stark reminder that dental disease has the potential to be deadly,” said Dr. Johnson. “We need to use every proven form of prevention that’s out there, and the most cost-effective form is fluoridated water.”

The EPA’s response can be accessed in the Federal Register (p. 11878):
<https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2017-02-27/pdf/FR-2017-02-27.pdf>

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The American Fluoridation Society was founded in 2014 by a group of concerned health professionals eager to see all U.S. residents who are served by community water systems enjoy the benefits of fluoridation. Learn more about the benefits and safety of fluoridated water at www.americanfluoridationsociety.org.

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