

Fact Sheet for Community Water Systems On Release of New Recommended Fluoride Levels for Drinking Water

**The Michigan Department of Natural Resources and Environment
and the Michigan Department of Community Health
January 21, 2011**

On January 7, 2011, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) released new recommendations for fluoride levels in drinking water. Their recommendation reaffirms that community water fluoridation is one of the most cost effective and safe measures for controlling dental decay in public health.

The new recommendation was developed in response to a 2006 report from the National Academies of Science suggesting EPA update their health and exposure assessment of fluoride in drinking water and other sources. From this assessment, EPA acknowledges it is now possible that Americans receive more fluoride from other sources so that slightly lower levels in drinking water will be sufficient. As a result, the EPA and HHS have **proposed a level of 0.7 mg/L** of fluoride as the optimal level for drinking water, replacing the previous recommendation of 0.7-1.2 mg/L.

This revised recommendation is based on data showing increasing dental fluorosis across the United States as a result of increasing exposure to fluoride in a variety of sources such as toothpaste, mouth wash and the application of various dental products. Mild fluorosis is noticed as chalky white lines on the enamel of teeth, barely noticeable except to a dental professional. Severe fluorosis is rare, but can cause pitting of the enamel and darker brown staining of the enamel.

The new guidance will update and replace original recommendations provided in 1962 by the U.S. Public Health Service. The current EPA regulations on fluoride consisting of a Maximum Contaminant Level of 4 mg/L and a Secondary Maximum Contaminant Level of 2 mg/L are not changing at this time but they will be assessed. Any proposed changes will have to follow EPA protocols for standard setting.

Comments on the proposed change to the recommended optimal fluoride level will be accepted for 30 days after publication in the Federal Register. Comments can be sent to CWFComments@cdc.gov

What does this mean for water systems?

Presently maintain current fluoride levels until the official recommendation is released in the Spring of 2011. You can begin to assess what your system would need to change when this recommendation becomes official.

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources and Environment (DNRE) and the Michigan Department of Community Health (MDCH) are assessing the information and will comply with the HHS recommendation once it is official.

Some information to share with concerned citizens:

- ✓ The preliminary data from our 2010 Count Your Smiles Survey of 3rd graders across the state of Michigan indicates 71% had no signs of dental fluorosis and only 0.04% had perceived severe fluorosis.
- ✓ The changed recommendation is very close to what most water communities were already using. Any reductions needed will be made after the revised recommendation becomes final later this year.
- ✓ Community water fluoridation is still considered safe and effective with no other health effects at the current levels used.
- ✓ There's nothing extraordinary about these announcements. In fact, they are very encouraging because they show that EPA and HHS are exercising their responsibilities to review standards and offer guidance on public health issues.
- ✓ The HHS updated recommendation regarding the optimal level of fluoride for public water supplies that adjust fluoride levels to prevent tooth decay is based upon the latest science. This decision will continue to protect Americans' dental health while also minimizing the chance of dental fluorosis—discoloration of teeth.
- ✓ If more information is needed refer to Susan Deming, Fluoridation Coordinator, MDCH-Oral Health, demings@michigan.gov

More general information on fluoride for improving dental health including an updated questions and answers document can be found at:
<http://www.cdc.gov/fluoridation/index.htm>.

All the risk analysis documents, including information on the results of the peer review process, are posted on EPA's website at:
http://water.epa.gov/action/advisories/drinking/fluoride_index.cfm.