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CDC reports increased access to fluoridated water

By Craig Palmer

Atlanta—The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, updating “the best available science,” said the CDC “continues to strongly support community water fluoridation as a safe and effective public health measure to prevent and control tooth decay and to improve overall health.”

CDC released national statistics showing a 2006-2008 increase of 3 percentage points in access to optimally fluoridated drinking water, stating that “community water fluoridation reaches a new high in the U.S.” Introducing the data at a revamped fluoridation website www.cdc.gov/fluoridation, the agency said, “For 65 years, community water fluoridation has been a safe and healthy way to effectively prevent tooth decay. CDC has recognized water fluoridation as one of 10 great public health achievements of the 20th century.”

“It is good news that the fight against tooth decay has taken a step forward with over 195 million Americans in 2008 receiving the benefits of optimally fluoridated water,” said Dr. Ronald L. Tankersley, ADA president. “This means, according to the recent Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report, an additional 15 million people have gained the assistance of community water fluoridation in fighting tooth decay since its last report covering 2006.

“We know from years of experience and scientific study that community water fluoridation benefits everyone. The American Dental Association has long advocated water fluoridation as the single most effective public health measure, preventing decay in children and adults. Our members continue their commitment of working with federal, state and municipal governments to seek additional increases in the number of Americans that can benefit from it.”

ADA resources are available at Fluoride&Fluoridation.

“The latest CDC statistics show that the nation is continuing to make significant progress towards achieving the national fluoridation goal of having 75 percent of people served by public water systems receiving optimally fluoridated water,” stated Dr. William G. Kohn, director of the CDC Division of Oral Health.

“The increase in population served in 2008 was largely driven by activities in California, notably the expansion of fluoridation by the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California, which implemented fluoridation in 5 water treatment plants serving 340 water utilities. This resulted in an increase in that state of more than 11 million people who now receive sufficient fluoride in their drinking water to prevent and control tooth decay.”

The fluoridation data indicate an increase in access to optimally fluoridated water from 184 million people or 69.2 percent of the U.S. population in 2006 to 195.5 million or 72.4 percent in 2008, the CDC said. The 2008 statistics were prepared using water system data reported by states to CDC’s Water Fluoridation Reporting System as of Dec. 31, 2008, and U.S. Census Bureau estimates from 2008.
2006 estimates were reported in CDC's *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report July 11, 2008 MMWR*.

Community water fluoridation prevents tooth decay in children and adults throughout the lifespan, the CDC said. A review by the Task Force on Community Preventive Services reported that water fluoridation reduces tooth decay by 30-50 percent in children and adolescents. A study published in the Journal of Dental Research found that fluoridation prevents about 27 percent of cavities in adults. "In making recommendations on community water fluoridation, the CDC and the U.S. Public Health Service are always guided by one overriding goal and interest—all our recommendations are designed to protect the health and well-being of the public," the CDC website says.

“These recommendations are based on reviews of the best available science.”