



May 25, 2016

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Ms. Madeline Drexler, Editor  
Harvard Public Health  
The Magazine of the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health  
Office for External Relations  
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Boston, Massachusetts 02120

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RE: "Is Fluoridated Drinking Water Safe?" article in *Harvard Public Health*, Spring 2016

Dear Ms. Drexler:

I am writing to express concern that *Harvard Public Health* would publish an article titled "Is Fluoridated Drinking Water Safe?" in the Spring 2016 issue and to share the reasons why the American Academy of Pediatrics stands behind the safety and effectiveness of community water fluoridation.

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) is a professional organization of 64,000 primary care pediatricians, pediatric medical sub-specialists, and pediatric surgical sub-specialists dedicated to the health, safety, and well-being of infants, children, adolescents, and young adults. The AAP echoes the recommendations of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the American Dental Association (ADA) in stating that community water fluoridation is safe, effective, and protective of unnecessary dental disease, a costly and painful condition.

The AAP is particularly concerned with the high rates of early childhood caries (tooth decay) in the United States and the detrimental effects this disease can have on children. Dental caries, although largely preventable, is the most common chronic childhood disease, five times more common than asthma. Dental caries can lead to severe health problems, including serious infection, debilitating pain, dietary and speech problems, and in rare cases, even death. Therefore, the AAP supports community water fluoridation as a way to help protect children's teeth. Several AAP policies and guidelines speak to the benefit of community water fluoridation. For example:

- Regular and frequent exposure to small amounts of fluoride is the best way to protect the teeth against caries. This exposure can be readily accomplished through drinking water that has been optimally fluoridated and brushing with fluoride toothpaste twice daily.<sup>1</sup>
- The delivery of fluoride includes community-based, professionally applied, and self-administered modalities. Water fluoridation is a community-based intervention that optimizes the level of fluoride in drinking water, resulting in pre-eruptive and post-eruptive protection of the teeth. Water fluoridation is a cost-effective means of preventing dental caries, with the lifetime cost per person equaling less than the cost of one dental restoration. In short, fluoridated water is the cheapest and most effective way to deliver anti-caries benefits to communities.<sup>2</sup>
- Water fluoridation is seen as effective and inexpensive, does not require daily adherence, and promotes equity, because it benefits everyone regardless of socioeconomic status.<sup>3</sup>

The AAP continues its mission to ensure the health and well-being of all children, and, to this end, supports local and state efforts to ensure children have access to safe, optimally fluoridated water. Thank you for the opportunity to provide this statement. If you require more information, please email the AAP at [oralhealth@aap.org](mailto:oralhealth@aap.org).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Benard P. Dreyer". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being the most prominent.

Benard P. Dreyer, MD, FAAP  
President

BPD/lb

<sup>1</sup> Bright Futures Guidelines for the Health Supervision of Infants, Children, and Adolescents, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition. 2008.

<sup>2</sup> Preventive Oral Health Intervention for Pediatricians. *Pediatrics*. 2008;122:1387-1394.

<sup>3</sup> Early Childhood Caries in Indigenous Communities. *Pediatrics*. 2011;127(6):1190-1198.

