

# Fluoridation Talking Points for Advocates

**Background:** CareQuest Institute for Oral Health partnered with Marketing for Change to conduct updated message testing on fluoride. The research dives into how different audiences respond to various messages about fluoride. Five statements about fluoride proved to be the most persuasive, and a sixth shares new public opinion findings.

## 1 Weight of the Evidence Shows Fluoride is Safe and Effective

“After more than 7,000 studies, the overwhelming weight of scientific evidence shows fluoridating water is safe and effective.”

- Water fluoridation has been the subject of more than 7,000 studies, making it one of the most studied topics in public health.
- The overwhelming weight of all that scientific evidence shows fluoridating water is safe and effective. Reviews have consistently shown no connection with cancer, autism, or any other health issue.
- Fluoride is a naturally occurring mineral in all sources of water. There is no evidence that water fluoridation, as used in the US, causes health problems.

## 2 Proven Oral Health Impact

- Dentists and pediatricians say both topical and ingestible fluoride are needed for healthy teeth, especially for kids whose teeth are still developing and may not have broken through their gums.
- Fluoride in water promotes overall health by reducing the rate of new tooth decay by 25–30%.
- Lack of fluoride in water contributes to poor oral health, resulting in worse health outcomes and higher health spending.

“Fluoridated water reduces tooth decay by 25% by strengthening the enamel and root structure of teeth.”

## 3 Widespread Endorsement

“Every major US health organization supports fluoridation, including the American Academy of Pediatrics and the Mayo Clinic.”

- While people tend to trust their own doctor or dentist most, institutional credibility still matters, and virtually all major health groups endorse CWF:
  - American Academy of Pediatrics
  - American Dental Association
  - Mayo Clinic
- Health care professionals are critical messengers on this topic, and provider associations lend credibility to evidence-based messages.

## 4 Best Practice for Children

**“Dentists and pediatricians say it’s best for children to get fluoride both topically, through fluoride toothpaste and varnish, as well as through drinking water for maximum health benefits.”**

- If opponents raise concerns that people will get “too much” fluoride from both topical and ingested sources, it is impossible to get a toxic dose from fluoride in drinking water — no matter how much one drinks — at the levels found in the US. Adults would have to drink 120 gallons of water in one sitting to reach a dangerous dose.

## 5 Real-World Consequences of Stopping CWF

- There are no substitutes that are close to the cost-effectiveness of water fluoridation. Every \$1 spent on community water fluoridation saves \$20 in treating cavities.
- Using prescription fluoride substitutes for children is much more expensive than fluoridating water, and compliance is generally poor.

**“A decade after discontinuing water fluoridation in 2011, Calgary reinstated it in 2021 because children’s cavity rates had jumped so dramatically.”**

## 6 Public Opinion Does Not Support Removing Fluoride

**“With only 6% of Americans supporting fluoride bans, there is little public appetite for policy efforts to remove it.”**

- Roughly half of all states have recently considered policies on fluoride, and almost all of them rejected proposals to weaken or end water fluoridation.
- Studies from communities that have stopped fluoridating have consistently shown increased dental treatment costs and higher rates of cavities, and some of these communities have recently reinstated water fluoridation because of these consequences.
- Harris voters are more likely to support fluoridation; Trump voters are less trusting overall, but nearly half still support fluoridation, and only 9% of Trump voters favor fluoride bans.

