Let’s Drink to Good Health:
Community Water Fluoridation

Virginia Oral Health Coalition Panel
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But first, ask yourself...

What are my thoughts on Community Water Fluoridation (CWF)?
Hmm...

- Established, safe and effective public health intervention that has been practiced for 70 years
- Responsible for the drastic decline in tooth decay 1950s through 2000
- The most equitable and cost-effective method of delivering fluoride for all members of community
- All major public health, medical, and dental organizations approve
- More than 3,000 scientific studies and research findings concluding that CWF is safe
Fluoride Keeps Teeth Healthy

- Tooth enamel absorbs fluoride before and after eruption
- Helps tooth resist cavities
- Helps healing of very early tooth decay
- Prevents bacteria from making acid

Image courtesy of Colgate
How Water Fluoridation Works

• **For Children:**
  - Fluoride becomes part of developing tooth enamel when swallowed
  - Prevents cavities
  - Keeps tooth enamel strong

• **For Children and Adults:**
  - Mixes with saliva to protect tooth enamel from plaque and sugars
  - Helps tooth enamel repair itself in early stages of dental decay
What the Evidence Shows

Water fluoridation reduces decay rates by approximately 25% among children and adults.

A 2010 New York study: children in the state’s less fluoridated counties needed 33% more fillings, root canals, and extractions than kids in counties where fluoridated water was widely available.
Brief History of Fluoride in Virginia

• First cities began fluoridating in 1951
• Steep upward trend of access to fluoridation
• By 1960, 62 localities fluoridating
• Currently, 96 percent of Virginians whose homes are served by public water systems receive fluoridated water
• Ranked #7 in US!
VDH: Dental Health Program

- DHP provides funding for fluoridation equipment
- Simple requirements in order to obtain funding
- $120,000 per year: $2,000-40,000 per award
- DHP works with ODW to identify water systems in need of assistance - Recent recipients:
  - Farmville
  - Harrisonburg
  - Kenbridge
  - Altavista
  - Rocky Mount
CWF is a Local Decision

- Oral health workers may not be aware that when active community members are against CWF, its continuance may be at stake
- Easy to stop fluoridation
- Age of Google = Age of mis-information
- Skepticism, distrust, and fear of safety and effectiveness of fluoridation
A QUICK GOOGLE SEARCH...

Google is water fluoridation bad

FLUORIDE

Near Germany used water fluoridation in concentration camps to sterilise the humans and force them into calm submission.

- Joseph de Koster, The Crime and Punishment of U. S. Famine

There is poison in the tap water.

Public notice: Please be advised.
- Kills rodents
- Causes cancer
- Lowers your iq
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www.infowars.com

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There is poison in the tap water.

Fluoride is a poison.

Fluoride is more toxic than lead.

1 Glass of Tap Water
Contains 3.2 mg of Fluoride
Or as much as you like

1 Serving of Toothpaste
Contains 0.4 mg of Fluoride
8 swallow and wait 45 minutes

VDH Virginia Department of Health
To protect the health and promote the well-being of all people in Virginia.

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Anti-fluoridation Movement

- In past 5 years, 74 cities have voted to remove fluoride from their water
- Fluoride Action Network (FAN)
  - Very strong social media messages
  - Very active - online and at the polls
  - Simplistic and alarmist view of fluoridation
  - Cites non-peer-reviewed, irrelevant studies
  - Graphics, charts, brochures, posters, handouts
Challenges to CWF in Virginia

- Spotsylvania
- Bedford
- Brookneal
Rapid Response Team

- Statewide team to support a locality during a CWF challenge
  - Members value oral health
  - Members tune in to local threats to CWF, such as:
    - Anti-CWF Letters to the Editor
    - Anti-CWF citizen speaking out at town meeting
    - Consumer Confidence Report indicates fluoride removal
- Build this network before it is needed
- People are more convinced by their own network than by the experts
- During local challenge, regular communication via phone/email
Rapid Response Team

State and Federal Partners:
- VDH Dental Health Program
- Virginia Oral Health Coalition
- Campaign for Dental Health (ILikeMyTeeth.org)
- CDC
- ADA

Local Partners:
- Dentists
- Hygienists
- Public health workers
- Social workers
- Teachers
- Pediatricians
- Parents
- VDH health district director
- Town board members
- Waterworks operators
How Can You be a CWF Partner?

- Join Rapid Response Team as a local partner
- Get the facts on CWF:
  - ADA Fluoridation Facts booklet
  - Visit ILikeMyTeeth.org = Campaign for Dental Health
- Educate patients on the importance and safety of water fluoridation
  - Most people don’t have an opinion on CWF
  - Provide trusted resources
    - Web sites
    - VDH handouts
    - ADA fluoride brochures
Thank You!

*Please consider joining the Rapid Response team by filling out a card before you leave today.*

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