

# National Academies rejects the NTP draft report about fluoride

## *American Fluoridation Society comments on this new review*

WASHINGTON, February 11, 2021 /PRNewswire/ — For the second time in two years, a National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine (NASEM) committee has issued a review rejecting the National Toxicology Program’s (NTP) assertion that fluoride negatively affects humans’ cognitive abilities. In its [newly released review](#), NASEM writes that NTP’s revised draft monograph “falls short of providing a clear and convincing argument” supporting its conclusion.

The NASEM review identifies numerous scientific weaknesses in NTP’s revised draft monograph that remain from the initial version [that NASEM reviewed](#) in March 2020. The new NASEM review instructs NTP to “make it clear that the monograph cannot be used to draw any conclusions” about low fluoride exposures, “including those typically associated with drinking-water fluoridation.”

Fluoride is a [natural mineral](#) found in lakes, rivers, groundwater and the oceans. Water fluoridation typically occurs when local water systems add a little more fluoride to reach the optimal level. Drinking tap water with this level of fluoride is proven to [reduce tooth decay by 25%](#) over a person’s lifetime. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) named water fluoridation one of 10 “great public health achievements of the 20th century.”

“We welcome NASEM’s new review because it should bring clarity to this issue,” said Dr. Johnny Johnson, a pediatric dentist who is president of the American Fluoridation Society, a nonprofit 501(c)4 organization. “For more than a year, opponents of water fluoridation have [weaponized the NTP’s draft monograph](#) as they tried to pressure local communities to end water fluoridation. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and leading health organizations worldwide have reaffirmed the safety of fluoride at levels used for water fluoridation.”

[A 2018 study revealed](#) that children in a third grade classroom of 30 students would have 39 fewer decayed surfaces in their primary teeth than the same number of third-graders in a community *without* fluoridation.

Research shows that tooth decay has risen in U.S. and Canadian cities that have ended water fluoridation in recent decades. In Alaska’s capital city (Juneau), the costs of treating tooth decay among low-income children [increased by 47%](#) after fluoridation was ended. After cessation, the average preschool-age child in Juneau needed one more cavity-related dental procedure per year.

Throughout its new report, NASEM raises a number of concerns with the NTP revised draft monograph on fluoride, including the following:

- The committee found many deficiencies in the systematic review methods and found that “such omissions decrease the reproducibility and transparency of the systematic review process and should be viewed as a deficiency” in NTP’s monograph.

- "Some text in the revised monograph continues to be impressionistic and haphazard in citing various findings from studies and does not provide a clear rationale for why some findings are reported and others are not."
- The committee expressed concerns about the lack of rigorous statistical review. NTP miscalculated the effect of fluoride on IQ in various studies because it did not "adequately address the issue of clustering." This can produce errors that "could invalidate the meta-analysis results."
- Lead exposure, maternal IQ, socioeconomic status and other factors should be considered when evaluating environmental neurotoxicity. NASEM said it "still considers NTP's evaluation of confounding insufficient and sometimes inconsistently applied."
- The method NTP used to select studies for its literature review could compromise its mission of conducting "an unbiased review," and it "should mention the weaknesses of the tests" that it used to evaluate publication bias among the studies it chose. NASEM "remains concerned" about the inclusion of studies that measure cognitive outcomes through self-reported diagnoses or other unreliable or ill-defined protocols.

In recent years, leading health and scientific researchers in other nations have reviewed and analyzed the evidence, reaching conclusions that reinforce the safety of fluoridated tap water. These experts include the following:

- Sweden: [The Effects of Fluoride in Drinking Water](#) (2021)
- European researchers: [Archives of Toxicology](#) (2020)
- Ireland: [Food Safety Authority of Ireland](#) (2018)
- England: [Fluoridation Monitoring Report](#) (2018)
- Australia: [National Health Medical Research Council](#) (2017)

Like the issue of vaccinations, fluoride is the target of [a variety of myths](#) and [conspiracy theories](#). The American Fluoridation Society offers a variety of fact sheets and other materials that distinguish the myths from the facts. For more information about the American Fluoridation Society, visit <https://americanfluoridationsociety.org/>.

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