

BOTTOM LINE
Natural Healing
With Dr. Mark Stengler

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281 Tresser Boulevard,
Stamford, CT 06901-3229
203-973-5900

DEEPER CURES FROM AMERICA'S TOP NATURAL PHYSICIAN

Mark A. Stengler, NMD ■ Stengler Center for Integrative Medicine

DON'T DRINK THE WATER

Why Fluoride Puts Your Health At Risk

Have you ever wondered why there is a warning on the labels of toothpastes? It tells users to keep the product away from children and to seek medical attention if more than the recommended amount for brushing is swallowed. *Reason:* Toothpaste contains fluoride.

For years, this chemical has been added to our water to reduce the occurrence of dental cavities—but unbelievably, the newest evidence shows that fluoridated water does not protect against cavities. In fact, it turns out that we don't need fluoride to protect our teeth at all.

Dentists advise that children use toothpaste that contains fluoride—and yet we keep all kinds of other medications and dangerous products away from children. But is toothpaste as dangerous? Yes. The average tube of toothpaste contains enough fluoride to kill a child. And how safe is a glass of fluoridated tap water?

Fluoride occurs naturally in soil, water and some plants. It also is a by-product of phosphate fertilizer production and is an industrial waste product of the aluminum smelting industry. The FDA maintains that fluoride is a drug. It's also known to be a highly toxic substance, even more toxic than lead. Once used as rat poison, it can cause serious health problems when ingested in unsafe amounts, including weak bones, hormone disruption and neurological damage.

And the truth is—fluoride is everywhere. It's not only in dental-hygiene products but also still in our water supply. It's been there since the 1940s, when extensive tooth decay was common across the US. In 1999, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) called water fluoridation one of the 10 greatest public health achievements of the 20th century.

Fast forward to 2011...and we are at risk for health problems because we are overexposed to fluoride. It is even in a number of products that our families consume (either when we add in fluoridated water or when the products themselves are made with fluoridated water), such as baby formula, processed cereals, juice, soda, tea, wine and beer. *What you need to know to protect yourself...*

FLUORIDE IN TAP WATER

It's not only the natural medicine community that is alarmed. Earlier this year, for the first time in about 50 years, the US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) announced that there was too much fluoride in the US water supply and recommended reducing the amount of fluoride added to water to 0.7 parts per million (ppm) everywhere. The limit had previously been 0.7 ppm in warm climates where people drink a lot of water to 1.2 ppm in cooler climates (where people presumably drink less).

FLUORIDE CAUSES HEALTH PROBLEMS

When you ingest fluoride, about half is excreted by the kidneys. The rest is stored in your bones and teeth, where it does the opposite of what it is supposed to do—it causes damage. According to the CDC, 41% of American adolescents now have dental fluorosis, an increase from 23% in 1987. This disfigurement of tooth enamel in teeth, which can range from white patches to brown mottling, typically occurs before age eight (when permanent teeth are all formed). This very high rate of fluorosis is thought to be caused by fluoride intake during childhood, from drinking fluoridated water (including commercial drinks made with fluoridated water) and swallowing toothpaste with fluoride.

In addition to fluorosis, fluoride causes other health problems...

- **Fluoride decreases bone strength.** A 2010 *Journal of Dental Research* study found that bone strength in animals decreases with increased levels of fluoride in bones. HHS also has noted that excess fluoride can result in bone fractures and skeletal fluorosis, a crippling condition.

- **Fluoride impairs brain function in children.** A 2008 systematic review published in *Biological Trace Element Research* found that children in China who live in an area with fluoridated water have five times greater risk for

Mark A. Stengler, NMD, licensed naturopathic medical doctor in private practice, Stengler Center for Integrative Medicine, Encinitas, California...adjunct associate clinical professor at the National College of Natural Medicine, Portland, Oregon...author of many books, including *The Natural Physician's Healing Therapies* and coauthor of *Prescription for Natural Cures* (both from Bottom Line Books)...and author of the *Bottom Line/Natural Healing* newsletter. www.DrStengler.com

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a lower IQ than children who live in a nonfluoridated or slightly fluoridated area. The water was fluoridated at a level of 2.47 milligrams per liter (mg/L), three times the US safe level. (Note that 1 ppm equals 1 mg/L.)

• **Fluoride upsets cardiac function.** Increased fluoride can result in abnormal calcification of cardiac tissue. This can impair cardiac function in animals, say researchers from Agricultural University Wageningen in the Netherlands, whose study was published in *Biological Trace Element Research*.

• **Fluoride interferes with cell metabolism.** Research published in *Toxicology Letters* in 2010 points to chronic fluoride exposure as a possible cause of oxidative stress, which results in inflammation throughout the body.

In addition, in 2006, the National Research Council (NRC) reviewed EPA water-safety standards. The NRC found that excessive fluoride intake was associated with hormone disruption, impaired thyroid function, increased free radical activity in the brain (potentially contributing to dementia) and abnormal insulin response.

IT DOESN'T REDUCE CAVITIES

Population studies show that people who live in communities that

fluoridate their water have no fewer cavities, on average, than people in communities without fluoridated water. While it's true that the US has experienced dramatic declines in cavities and tooth decay over the past 50 years, the same holds true for people in Europe, where many countries discontinued the practice of water fluoridation starting in the 1970s. It is believed that cavities have decreased despite water fluoridation cessation because of better oral hygiene.

MINIMIZE YOUR FLUORIDE INTAKE

Water fluoridation is an unsafe practice that should be stopped. If you live in the US, there's a 70% chance that your tap water is fluoridated. Since water fluoridation is left up to individual states and municipalities, practices vary from town to town. *Examples:* New York City, Minneapolis and Chicago currently maintain a water fluoride content of 1 mg/L. To check the fluoride content of your water, contact your local water utility or visit <http://apps.nccd.cdc.gov/MWF/Index.asp>. You can join the growing number of people who are letting their local government agencies know about the health concerns of fluoridated water.

To further protect yourself...

• **Drink spring water.** It usually contains less than 0.1 ppm of fluoride.

• **Use a water filter.** One of the best types of filters for removing fluoride is the reverse-osmosis filter, available at appliance stores for \$300 to \$400. Many household filters, such as Brita and Pur, do not eliminate fluoride.

AVOIDING FLUORIDE IN DENTAL PRODUCTS

The concentration of fluoride in many commercially made toothpastes is high—about 1,000 ppm to 1,500 ppm. Even when you don't swallow fluoridated toothpaste, some fluoride is absorbed by the body and goes into the bloodstream. I'm convinced that there is no benefit from any kind of topical application of fluoride—whether it's toothpaste, mouthwash or even a onetime fluoride treatment from the dentist. Both children and adults should not use fluoride treatment or supplements of any kind.

Switch to a toothpaste that doesn't include fluoride—and that does contain only natural ingredients. Make sure these include *xylitol*, a compound derived from plant fibers that is known to prevent cavities. Many such toothpastes are available at health-food stores. Also, work with a holistic dentist to ensure dental health. ■ ■