

National Research Council (NRC) Report

"Fluoride in Drinking Water: A Scientific Review of EPA's Standards (2006)"



In 2002, as part of the periodic review required by the Safe Drinking Water Act, the EPA requested that the National Research Council, a branch of the National Academy of Sciences, review the current Maximum Contaminant Level Goal of 4 parts per million (ppm) of fluoride occurring naturally in water to ensure that it was protective of public health. Approximately 200,000 people in the U.S. have water supplies with natural fluoride levels at or exceeding 4 ppm.

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Statements Used Out-of-Context to Mislead

NRC statements regarding the risks of high fluoride levels have been taken out of context and have been falsely attributed to fluoridated water. For example, a speaker hosted by the Citizens for Safe Drinking Water (Jan. 13, 2007) claimed the NRC study showed that the "effects of fluoride exposures include[d] thyroid damage, impaired glucose tolerance, possible effects on timing of sexual activity, and played a possible role in the development of several disease or mental states in the United States." The speaker failed to differentiate between optimal fluoride levels and toxic fluoride levels, willfully misleading his audience.

Anti-fluoridationist, Dr. Paul Connett, Executive Director of the Fluoride Action Network, made this announcement on March 22, 2006: "NRC Delivers Wake-Up Call on Fluoride!!! The crucial message of this report is that the highest scientific authority in the U.S. has determined that low levels of fluoride in drinking water may have serious adverse health effects."

www.fluoridealert.org/health/epa/nrc/press01.html

Conclusion: The anti-fluoridationists are distorting and misrepresenting the NRC report on fluoride to further their agenda to end the practice of fluoridation.

Setting the Record Straight

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: "The [NRC] report addresses the safety of high levels of fluoride in water that occur naturally, and does not question the use of lower levels of fluoride to prevent tooth decay."

www.cdc.gov/fluoridation/safety/nrc_report.htm

National Research Council: "Because fluoride is well known for its use in the prevention of dental caries, it is important to make the distinction here that EPA's drinking-water guidelines are not recommendations about adding fluoride to drinking water to protect the public from dental caries. Guidelines for that that purpose were established the U.S. Public Health Service more than 40 years ago."

http://books.nap.edu/openbook.php?record_id=11571&page=1

John Doull, Professor Emeritus of Pharmacology and Toxicology and Chair of the Committee on Fluoride in Drinking Water (the committee responsible for the NRC report): "Fluoride is regulated as a drinking-water contaminant by the Environmental Protection Agency. Water can become contaminated with fluoride from natural sources, including runoff and leaching from rocks and soils that contain fluoride. Industrial pollution can also contribute to fluoride levels in water. Because high amounts of fluoride can be toxic, EPA places a cap, or

maximum contaminant level, on fluoride concentrations in drinking water in order to prevent the public from being exposed to harmful levels. Our committee was charged with evaluating the adequacy of EPA's guidelines for protecting public health."

"Most people associate fluoride in water with fluoridation -- the addition of fluoride into public drinking-water supplies to help prevent tooth decay in communities where natural fluoride levels are very low. Thus, it is important to make the distinction here that EPA's standards are not guidelines for that practice. Water fluoridation guidelines were established by the Public Health Service more than 40 years ago. The levels used for that practice are lower than EPA's drinking water standards, and an evaluation of the safety or efficacy of those lower concentrations were outside the charge to the committee."

From the NRC report

http://books.nap.edu/openbook.php?record_id=11571&page=14

In this report, the National Research Council's (NRC's) Committee on Fluoride in Drinking Water reviews the nature of the human health risks from fluoride, estimates exposures to the general public from drinking water and other sources, and provides an assessment of the adequacy of the MCLG for protecting public health from adverse health effects from fluoride and of the SMCL for protecting against cosmetic effects. Assessing the efficacy of fluoride in preventing dental caries is not covered in this report.

This chapter briefly reviews the sources of fluoride in drinking water, states the task the committee addressed, sets forth the committee's activities and deliberative process in developing the report, and describes the organization of the report.

FLUORIDE IN DRINKING WATER

Fluoride may be found in drinking water as a natural contaminant or as an additive intended to provide public health protection from dental caries (artificial water fluoridation). EPA's drinking water standards are restrictions on the amount of naturally occurring fluoride allowed in public water systems, and are not recommendations about the practice of water fluoridation. Recommendations for water fluoridation were established by the U.S. Public Health Service, and different considerations were factored into how those guidelines were established.