



21 September 2022

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s 9(2)(a)

By email: **s 9(2)(a)**
Ref: H2022011143

Tēnā koe **s 9(2)(a)**

Response to your request for official information

Thank you for your request under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act) to Manatū Hauora (Ministry of Health) on 25 August 2022 for information relating to community water fluoridation. Please find a response to each part of your request below.

What is the source of the fluoride that is to be added?

This is the responsibility of the relevant drinking water supplier.

How you propose to get the at risk "target" group of children to drink water?

The benefits of community water fluoridation are broadly spread, but are greater for Māori, Pacific people, and those living in deprived communities. Community water fluoridation provides continuous protection throughout the day and requires no behavioural change.

Why are there no programs to educate the children to educate their caregivers on better eating and drinking habits happening in schools?

Manatū Hauora has developed guidance to improve the food environment in schools, kura, English and Māori medium Early Learning Services. You can find information on this initiative here: www.health.govt.nz/publication/healthy-food-and-drink-guidance-schools.

Can you guarantee that the minimum dose of fluoride added will not be exceeded?

Local authorities and water suppliers are responsible for providing safe drinking water to their communities. Mandatory reporting of exceedances of the Maximum Acceptable Value of fluoride (i.e 1.5mg per litre) is required by Taumata Arowai in line with the Drinking Water Standards for New Zealand.

Have you carried out research as to how long term fluoride will affect people with conditions such as arthritis and osteoporosis and any bone disease?

The Office of the Prime Minister's Chief Science Advisor recently released an evidence update that found that there are no significant health risks with fluoridation at the level used in New Zealand, including risks to bone health. [Fluoridation: an evidence update | Office of the Prime Minister's Chief Science Advisor \(pmcsa.ac.nz\)](https://www.pmcscsa.ac.nz/fluoridation-an-evidence-update/) You can find further information about the safety of community water fluoridation here: [Fluoride facts | Fluoride facts](#).

No one pays for an item/product we do not want so how will this apply to the majority of consumers that do not want fluoride in their water they pay for?

This part of your request is refused under section 18(g) on the grounds that it is not held by Manatū Hauora and there are no grounds for believing it is held by another agency subject to the Act.

Will you give us an alternative so we can purchase safe drinking water? Our water prices have already increased

An alternative is not necessary as local authorities are required to ensure drinking water is safe, including when fluoridating drinking water.

Why not increase the prices of "lolly" water sweets and other foods identified as causing teeth decay

I'm well aware of what children eat and drink in school hours from my work in schools especially low decile schools where it seems there are more tooth decay issues.

Have you considered providing fluoride tablets to at risk families instead of putting fluoride in our water supply?

- *If 'no' then why not?*
- *If 'yes', then why do you propose to add it to our water when you will already be providing it to at risk families?*

The key benefit of fluoridating drinking-water is its potential for greater oral health gains at lower cost than other oral health interventions. It is also considered as the most effective public measure for the prevention of dental decay.

Manatū Hauora does not support the use of fluoride tablets as a general population health measure, though they may be appropriate for some children and adults on the advice of an oral health practitioner.

Under section 28(3) of the Act, you have the right to ask the Ombudsman to review any decisions made under this request. The Ombudsman may be contacted by email at: info@ombudsman.parliament.nz or by calling 0800 802 602.

Please note that this response, with your personal details removed, may be published on the Manatū Hauora website at: www.health.govt.nz/about-ministry/information-releases/responses-official-information-act-requests.

Nāku noa, nā



Jane Chambers
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