

Nau mai haere mai,

Welcome to the first National Fluoridation Information Service newsletter, *On Tap*. At NFIS we provide clear, evidence-based facts on water fluoridation to organisations such as local councils and district health boards.

Councils and District Health Boards (DHBs) play a vital role in providing communities with all the information they need on water fluoridation. To help make sure these groups are kept updated *On Tap* will be a regular newsletter filled with the latest research, studies, news and views.

NFIS collates new research on water fluoridation all the time and so our information is up to date and of the highest calibre. We work with a wide range of researchers to ensure our knowledge is multi-faceted and robust. By examining and analysing findings from studies here and internationally we can provide information that is on the cutting edge of oral health research.

Having access to high quality information is an essential part of ensuring community leaders, authorities and stakeholders make informed decisions on water fluoridation that are in the best interests of all parts of their community.

We value your feedback and would like to hear what you found most helpful, or would like to know more about.

04 570 9002 or nfis@huttvalleydhb.org.nz



nfis.org.nz



WORLD ORAL HEALTH DAY

World Oral Health Day on 12 September 2011, provides the perfect opportunity for schools, health providers and individuals to focus on the importance of looking after our teeth.

Healthy teeth means better overall health and well-being for everyone, especially our children and now is a great time to highlight the connection.

Many factors go in to healthy teeth including diet, fluoride, regular flossing and brushing, and professional dental care.

Emmeline Haymes, Coordinator at NFIS says, "A really great way that we can support better dental health across the region in a way that is fair and accessible is through fluoridated water. It's safe, cost effective, painless and readily accessible in most parts of the community."

"When communities choose to fluoridate water in their area, they are providing a pivotal piece of the wider oral health picture, and that means they are helping secure better all round health for their community." Says Ms Haymes.

World Oral Health Day is supported by The New Zealand Dental Association (NZDA) and the FDI World Dental Federation as well as national dental associations around the world. The aim is to increase awareness for oral health, as well as the impact of oral diseases on general health and well-being.

For more information visit www.healthysmiles.org.nz



Kathie McCarten and Emmeline Haymes

Introducing NFIS

The National Fluoride Information Service (NFIS) is a consortium funded by the Ministry of Health (MoH). Led by Regional Public Health, it also includes the Hutt Valley DHB Community Dental Services, Environmental Science and Research, Centre for Public Health Research at Massey University and the National Poisons Centre.

There is ongoing research and monitoring around the world looking at the effectiveness and safety of water fluoridation programmes. NFIS has been established to monitor and assess this work and to provide technical advice on these issues. NFIS offers robust and independent scientific and technical information around water fluoridation to District Health Boards and Territorial Local Authorities (Councils).

Seven ways we help:

- 1 We follow public debate and choices on water fluoridation
- 2 We monitor international research on the usefulness of water fluoridation
- 3 We critically review emerging research
- 4 We work with District Health Boards and Councils to provide accurate and up-to-date information to their communities
- 5 We provide clinical advice to the Ministry of Health
- 6 We provide access to New Zealand oral health data and research
- 7 We share information via newsletters, briefings and through our website on the Hutt Valley DHB web portal.

NOTE: There are a number of interest groups who claim to provide facts and analysis on fluoride and water fluoridation. They are not supported by the Government, Ministry of Health or Regional Public Health. One of these has taken the name New Zealand Fluoridation Information Service or NZFIS. Due to obvious similarities between this and the name of the Regional Public Health consortium NFIS some confusion may arise for stakeholders. NFIS is the only government-funded information base on water fluoridation.

Waimarama

 BY EMMELINE HAYMES

Waimarama reflects what we want to achieve in the area of water fluoridation information.

It brings together two concepts: wai or water and marama, which means clarity or "easy to understand". At NFIS our goal is to provide clear information that is also easy to use for our Councils, DHBs and oral health professionals wanting to supply their communities with comprehensive facts.

As the coordinator at NFIS I am tasked with bringing together research, findings, updates and studies into water fluoridation so it is readily accessible for our stakeholders. I have a personal and a professional motivation to make sure people get the facts on fluoridation. I am a registered nutritionist with a background in public health and a mother of three.

I studied at Otago University and I have a BSc and a MSc, both in human nutrition, from there. Before joining NFIS I worked in a range of nutrition roles from Community Nutritionist for Ngati Porou Hauora to Senior Risk Assessor for Food Standards Australia New Zealand.

My husband is a GP and as well as three children, I have two cats, two fish, two frogs, one dog and five siblings - that's a lot of smiles to look after!

I enjoy my role at NFIS because I believe that in order to make informed choices about their health and wellbeing communities need to have all the facts in front of them in a way that's easy to understand.

FLUORIDATION FEEDBACK

"In April 2011, the Hastings District Council held a workshop on the subject of water fluoridation. This was in response to a request by the local Fluoride Action Network NZ representatives. Their views were presented by visiting retired professor Paul Connett from the USA.

The Hawkes Bay District Health Board was represented by Dr Robin Whyman, public health dentist and dental clinician, and Dr Michael Beasley, toxicologist, supported by Emmeline Haymes from the National Fluoridation Information Service.

Local input came from Dr David Marshall, Principal Dental Officer from HBDHB. The Hastings District Council councillors asked a range of questions and it was decided that the council will formally discuss the need to review the continuance of water fluoridation in Hastings water supply at a future meeting.

Hastings has been fluoridated for almost 60 years, being the first city in New Zealand to be fluoridated. "The Hawkes Bay DHB is extremely grateful to have had the expertise of two of New Zealand's leading authorities to present on its behalf and thanks both and NFIS, for their help."

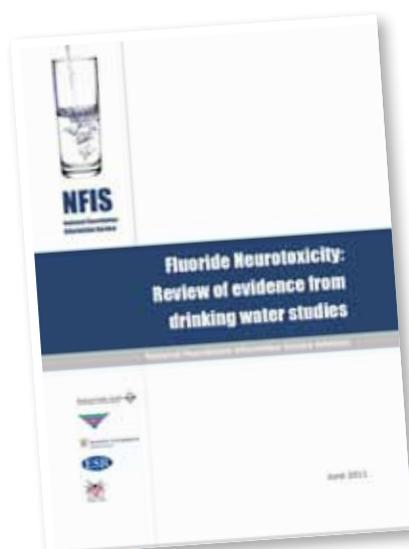
David Marshall, Principal Dental Officer and Senior Dentist Oral Health Services - Memorial Hospital, Omaha Road, Hastings

"The recently formed National Fluoridation Information Service has performed impressively and proved its value, particularly in its responsiveness to District Health Board's requests for information during the recent visit to New Zealand by Paul Connett. The range of scientific expertise that sits within NFIS and the robust, independent technical information and commentary the service provides are valuable for colleagues involved in the area of water fluoridation. I see the service informing and supporting dental and medical colleagues within the private and public sectors as well as, Ministry colleagues and Territorial Local Authorities when questions arise about water fluoridation. I strongly encourage colleagues to make full use of this valuable resource.

The value of such a service was instantly recognised by the Chief Dental Officers and Principal Dental Officers of the States and Territories of Australia when I spoke of the new service recently.

The Ministry thanks the service for the valuable contribution it has already made. I look forward to continuing to work with the future development of the service."

Dr Robyn Haisman-Welsh, Chief Dental Officer - Oral Health Sector Capability and Implementation - Ministry of Health



FAST FLUORIDE FACTS

2,334,084 people in 125 zones within 48 communities in New Zealand have access to fluoridated water.

The largest community is Auckland with over 1.3 million people supplied and the smallest is Western District in Waikato with 33 people supplied.

Fluoride is a naturally occurring element and the 13th most common element on earth.

Fluoride is present in unfertilised soils, sea water and most New Zealand fresh water.

It's a fair, accessible and inexpensive way to fight tooth decay and improve oral health and overall wellbeing.

"In response to a visit from Paul Connett, the Hamilton City Council organised a fluoridation workshop. The Medical Officer of Health of the Waikato District Health Board was invited to speak. The National Fluoridation Information Service provided research material, powerpoint presentations presented in a similar setting, advice on content and reviewed our presentation. However it was not just technical support and advice they gave. The service also provided assistance with managing misinformation."

Dr Felicity Dumble, Medical Officer of Health/ Public Health Physician Population Health - Waikato District Health Board

Current documents

As part of its responsibility to critically appraise international water fluoridation research NFIS will produce summary and advisory papers.

These will help District Health Boards and Councils who are considering or reviewing their local oral health status. The papers will be particularly useful for those who want to be informed of recent research and be up to date with issues surrounding oral health and water fluoridation choices in their area. All of these documents will be available on the NFIS website following peer review.

DOCUMENTS AVAILABLE:

[Environmental Scan: an overview of recent water fluoridation activity in New Zealand](#)

This document provides a summary of the status of water fluoridation in New Zealand over the past five years, including debates and choices councils have made around water fluoridation across the country up to December 2010.

[Review of Scientific Reviews Relating to Water Fluoridation](#)

This systematic review summarises the findings of international research on water fluoridation published in peer-reviewed journals and the 'grey literature' between January 2000 and July 2010.

[Advisory Fluoride Neurotoxicity: review of evidence from drinking water studies](#)

A review of published epidemiological studies exploring the statistical relationship between estimated levels of fluoride exposure of children and their intelligence.

[Advisory on delayed eruption](#)

This report explores information published by the Fluoride Action Network about the Australian data, that appears to suggest observed benefits of water fluoridation may be explained by late eruption of teeth in children who drink fluoridated water.

AVAILABLE SOON:

[Advisory CDC 2010 report – Review of the National Centre for Human Statistics Data Brief No. 53](#)

In January 2011 the US Department of Health and Human Services and the US Environmental Protection Agency published a proposal to replace the current recommended concentration range for water fluoridation of 0.7–1.2 mg/L with a single concentration level of 0.7 mg/L. NFIS has reviewed the documents that the proposal was based on to consider their relevance to the New Zealand situation.

[Advisory EPA reports](#)

The EPA assessments were formulated in two draft reports were released on 7 January 2011 by the Office of Water. The first EPA report is a dose-response assessment for non-cancer fluoride related health effects (dental fluorosis and skeletal fluorosis).

The second EPA report discusses environmental exposure of children and adults to fluoride and the relative contribution for water fluoridation. The NFIS report considers the relevance of the two reports to water fluoridation in New Zealand.

the f word

The debate on whether or not a community should introduce additional fluoride to their water supply can become heated with advocates and opposers both very passionate about the subject. Although it can become an emotive issue it's important to keep the facts in focus.

Fluoride is a nutrient and a normal constituent of the human body, involved in the mineralisation of both teeth and bones. The fluoride concentration in bones and teeth is about 10,000 times that in body fluids and soft tissues. Ingestion of fluoride reduces dental caries in both the formation and retention of teeth. Because of low natural levels of fluoride in some water supplies and high dental caries, worldwide many authorities, including those in Australia and New Zealand promote fluoridation of water supplies. This has met with some opposition partly because of dental fluorosis.

In the 1991 Nutrient Reference Values (NRVs) for Australia and New Zealand, the NHMRC, concluded that in communities with fluoridated water a concentration of 1mg/L secures most of the caries preventive effect from water fluoridation, while maintaining minimal contribution to dental fluorosis and no evidence of adverse health effects (attributable to fluoride).

The 2009 New Zealand Oral Health Survey found a very low overall prevalence of moderate fluorosis among people aged 8-30 (about 2%) and no severe fluorosis. Interestingly it also found no significant difference in the prevalence of moderate fluorosis, or any of the milder forms of fluorosis, between people living in fluoridated and non-fluoridated areas.

The 2009 survey provided the first opportunity to look at the effect of fluoride on dental health across all age groups in the population. The survey found that children and adults living in fluoridated areas had significantly lower lifetime dental decay experience than children and adults living in non-fluoridated areas. Although only a snapshot, these findings suggest that fluoridation of community water supplies continues to provide protection against dental decay in all age groups across the population.

Significant inequalities remain in the oral health status of New Zealanders. The publicly-funded oral health system aims to meet the oral health needs of all children in NZ, but the results of the 2009 NZOHS show significant disparities still exist, particularly for Maori and Pacific Children. Maori and Pacific children and adolescents were less likely to have accessed oral health services in the past year. These trends are reflected for adults also where no publicly-funded oral health system exists.



NFIS
National Fluoridation
Information Service

NFIS CONSORTIUM PARTNERS:

Regional Public Health
North South & The Tasmanian Region



MASSETT UNIVERSITY
WELLINGTON

ESR



Up and coming on the NFIS website:

6 monthly review of reviews + advisories on:

-  Water fluoridation
-  Bioethics
-  Community decision making
-  Thyroid function
-  IQ

nfis.org.nz

FLUORIDE IN THE NEWS

DHB set to back fluoride in water

TARANAKI DAILY NEWS - 27 APRIL 2011

Taranaki health officials look set to join the affirmative side of the fluoridation debate.

At a Taranaki District Health Board health advisory committee meeting yesterday, members were presented with a position statement on the issue. Most backed the health benefits.

Committee member Dr Peter Catt said there was a chronic oral health issue in the region and he totally supported the statement, which backed fluoridation of drinking water at safe levels to help prevent tooth decay.

"In general practice we see the problems of dental care. It's not just limited to pain and cosmetic issues – people have trouble simply eating," Dr Catt said.

Healthy Taranaki development manager Becky Jenkins said oral health was a priority for the DHB and an issue with significant inequalities between Maori and non-Maori.

In Taranaki in 2010, 55 per cent of all five-year-old children were free of dental cavities, with 62 per cent of "other" ethnicities cavity-free, compared to only 33 per cent of Maori.

New Plymouth's water has been fluoridated since 1970 with Waitara and Lepperton joining 20 years later and Urenui in 1999.

Inglewood, Oakura and Okato's water supplies are not fluoridated and only Hawera's urban supply in South Taranaki is.

Committee chairwoman Flora Gilkison said there was a lot of evidence-based research that fluoridation improved oral health.

"You do see huge improvements. They didn't have it around when I was younger and there's a huge difference between my oral health compared to that of my children."

Fluoride leader considers reversal

THE DOMINION POST - 29 JULY 2011

The first place in New Zealand to have fluoridated water will hold a referendum to decide if it should be removed.

Fluoride was introduced to Hastings' water supply in 1954.

Hastings district councillors yesterday voted unanimously in favour of holding a binding referendum. Papers will be sent out with voting papers in the 2013 local government election.