



BOARD OF HEALTH

Dave Koch
Director

Tatiana Izakovic, MD, MHA
Michael P. McLaughlin, PhD
Zachary J. Pollock, PharmD, MS
Bonnie Rubin, CLS, MBA, MHA
Peter D. Wallace, MD, MS

Johnson County Board of Health Position Statement on Community Water Fluoridation

The Johnson County Board of Health is strongly committed to the fluoridation of community water systems in an effort to decrease costs to the public and prevent dental caries.

Dental caries (tooth decay) is the single most common chronic childhood disease, 5 times more common than asthma. In 2016, the Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH) reported up to 57% of children in Iowa ages 3-15 years old had a dental decay experience. In Johnson County, almost 10,000 residents are living in poverty, increasing their risk of dental disease. Only 55% of this population received dental care in the last year due to lack of access and other barriers. Additionally, according to the American Dental Association, cuts in adult Medicaid dental benefits are causing a shift away from preventive dental care, and increasing costs to emergency departments that provide palliative care for preventable dental conditions. In 2018, IDPH reported 9,853 visits were made to the emergency room for dental-related problems. According to the American Dental Association, "Visits to the ER for dental pain are costly and can range from \$400 to \$1,500 compared to a \$90 to \$200 visit to a dentist."

Fluoridating water to the optimal level reduces tooth decay by 25% and is considered one of the most cost-effective measures to prevent tooth decay and improve oral health. In 1999, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recognized fluoridation as one of the ten great public health achievements of the twentieth century. It is a public health initiative where everyone benefits, whether rich or poor, no matter the age, without requiring any conscious effort of the individual.

Despite decades of evidence, there are over 500 communities in Iowa that are still choosing not to fluoridate their water systems, leaving approximately 280,000 Iowans without the benefit of fluoridated water. Additionally, the number of communities choosing to fluoridate is decreasing in recent years. In 2015, 17.3% of Iowa's community water systems were adjusting their fluoride level. In 2019, only 13.8% of systems are adjusting their fluoride level - a 20% decrease.

Along with the overwhelming majority of the world's health care organizations and leaders within the scientific community, the Johnson County Board of Health firmly supports community water fluoridation and urges community water systems to fluoridate water at concentrations recommended by the CDC as an economical, equitable, safe, and effective means to control the major public health problem of dental caries.

Adopted: June 8, 2016

Reviewed and Approved: September 18, 2019