

# Fluoridation of water supplies

## FACT SHEET

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### What is fluoride?

Fluoride is a naturally occurring mineral found in soil, rocks, seawater and groundwater. Seawater contains up to 1.4 parts per million (ppm) fluoride, while some groundwater in western Queensland can have over 3 ppm.

### Why is fluoride added to our water?

Fluoride is added to drinking water because it strengthens tooth enamel and reduces tooth decay. The Department of Health is responsible for encouraging councils in Queensland to add fluoride to drinking water.

Fluoridation in Queensland is regulated in accordance with the Water Fluoridation Act 2008 and Water Fluoridation Regulation 2020. For more information see <https://www.health.qld.gov.au/public-health/industry-environment/environment-land-water/water/fluoridation>.

Under the Act, each local government in Queensland is able to make the decision whether or not the town water supplies within their area are fluoridated. As the region's bulk water authority, Seqwater has a responsibility to councils to provide an assessment of potential impacts of fluoridation on the South East Queensland bulk water supply system. Full costs to reverse the decision to fluoridate the water supply must be borne by the relevant local council.

### Is water fluoridation safe?

For more than 50 years, the addition of fluoride to drinking water has proven to be a safe and effective way to reduce tooth decay and improve oral health in communities throughout Australia and around the world.

Fluoridation is supported by many peak health bodies including the National Health and Medical Research Council, the Australian Dental Association, the Australian Medical Association and the World Health Organization.

The only health consideration with optimally fluoridated water is dental fluorosis, which occurs in a small proportion of children when they are exposed to too much fluoride in food, water or toothpaste. Dental fluorosis in children is typically mild and shows up as white flecks in the teeth. Mild fluorosis does not weaken teeth and is of only cosmetic concern.

### Where is fluoride added in South East Queensland?

In December 2008 a major rollout of fluoridation of drinking water supplies began in Queensland, with the majority of homes in South East Queensland now receiving fluoride in their tap water. Seqwater operates more than 20 fluoridated drinking water supplies.

### How much fluoride is added to drinking water?

The Department of Health prescribes the optimal fluoride concentration levels for South East Queensland to be 0.8 ppm. Hotter parts of Queensland, where people drink more water, have optimal fluoride levels at either 0.6 or 0.7 ppm.

### How are fluoride levels checked?

Seqwater monitors the fluoride concentration in drinking water continuously and reports regularly to Queensland Health on its testing program.

### What types of fluoride are used by Seqwater?

Seqwater uses either sodium fluorosilicate or sodium fluoride at its water treatments plants, depending on the size and requirements of the plant. Larger plants like the Mount Crosby Water Treatment Plant use sodium fluorosilicate.

This information has been sourced from the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines 2011 and the Queensland Health Department (<http://www.health.qld.gov.au/public-health/industry-environment/environment-land-water/water/fluoridation/default.asp>).

### For more information

If you have further questions, please contact us:

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