Water Fluoridation in Port Macquarie-Hastings

On August 6, 2004 after weeks of careful review following referral to an expert committee, NSW Health approved the addition of fluoride to the Port Macquarie-Hastings District Water Supply.

Port Macquarie-Hastings is one of three councils on the NSW Mid North Coast whose community does not benefit from fluoridated tap water.

In February 2012, in an effort to reduce the occurrences of tooth decay in our community, Port Macquarie-Hastings Council will join many other NSW cities currently providing 90 per cent of the population with fluoridated water.

How much fluoride is added?

Fluoride is added to achieve a concentration of 1mg/litre (1ppm) +/- 5% (allowable range is 0.95ppm to 1.05ppm). The operation of the centralised fluoridation dosing plant will initially result in a gradual increase in the level of fluoride provided to the majority of water consumers.

This gradual increase in fluoride content will be due to the initial dilution of the fluoridated water (1 mg/L of fluoride content) which is piped into the Port Macquarie Off-Creek Storage Dam. The existing stored water in the dam has a natural level of fluoride of approximately 0.1 mg/L.

Based upon the current level of water demands, it is estimated that it could take between 6 to 12 months for the fluoride level to reach 1 mg/L in the water stored in the Port Macquarie Off-Creek Storage Dam.

This will also be the case when Cowarra Off-Creek Storage Dam is brought online to supply water directly to the Camden Haven area. The timing of this operational arrangement is subject to the construction of a new water supply trunkmain currently planned for completion by 2018.

Residents in Wauchope including Beechwood, Rawdon Island, Sancrox and Thrumster areas, who receive water directly from the Rosewood Road Reservoir, will be provided almost immediately with a fluoride content of 1 mg/L.

The information in this brochure is provided by and endorsed by the NSW Ministry of Health.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

Website: www.fluoridenow.com.au

For health questions related to fluoridation contact the NSW Ministry of Health Environmental Health Branch Water Unit: (02) 9391 9939 or by email to: waterqual@doh.health.nsw.gov.au
Why fluoridate water when fluoride is widely available from other sources?

The number of ways in which exposure to fluoride may occur has increased in recent decades.

In Australia, the main fluoride vehicles are water fluoridation and toothpaste with fluoride.

The changing pattern of fluoride exposure has accentuated the need to determine the relative benefits of fluoride from water versus other contemporary sources.

Current research in Australia has demonstrated a continued benefit of fluoridation in dental decay prevention.

These findings show that dental decay was lower among children in fluoridated than non-fluoridated areas.

This indicates that water fluoridation provides decay-prevention benefits additional to those provided by exposure to other fluoride sources alone.

Most toothpaste that is manufactured in Australia contains fluoride.

Analysis of the interaction of teeth brushing frequency with lifetime exposure to water fluoridation has indicated that even among children brushing regularly there is a 24% advantage of lifetime exposure to water fluoridation over those with no exposure.

Why is fluoridation used?

Water fluoridation has been found to be effective in preventing dental decay, even in the presence of other fluoride vehicles such as toothpaste with fluoride.

Water fluoridation reduces socio-economic inequalities in decay experience in children. There is a clear social justice argument for both the continuation and expansion of water fluoridation.

Water fluoridation remains the most effective and socially equitable measure of achieving community-wide reduction in dental decay.

Water fluoridation benefits anyone with natural teeth

The belief that only children benefit from fluoride is outdated. While fluoride incorporated into forming tooth enamel before eruption may help to prevent decay, the presence of fluoride at the surfaces of teeth after eruption has been shown to be the main mode of action.

It is for this reason that the beneficial effect of fluoride is available to individuals of all ages with teeth.

Water fluoridation has been rated in the top 10 public health achievements of the 20th century by the Centre for Disease Control in the USA.

Why fluoridate water?

Over 100 studies in more than 20 countries have shown that fluoridation reduces dental decay, which explains the high priority given to water fluoridation by public health authorities.

Many millions of people throughout the world now receive drinking water with controlled fluoride concentrations; including nearly 2 in 3 Australians, with fluoridated water supplies in all capital cities.

Many small communities in NSW also now have access to fluoridated water. Approximately 95% of New South Wales’ population has access to fluoridated water.

Is water fluoridation safe?

Water fluoridation has been established as a safe and effective public health procedure. According to the National Health and Medical Research Council (2007) “The existing body of evidence strongly suggests that fluoridation is beneficial for reducing dental decay.”

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