

**GENERAL OVERVIEW**

The San Francisco Public Utilities Commission (SFPUC) has been supplying fluoridated water to San Francisco residents and the majority of its wholesale customers since the early 1950s. Since November 1, 2005, SFPUC fluoridated the remaining 20% of our customer service area, except for those in Half Moon Bay. Currently, SFPUC supplements naturally occurring fluoride in drinking water to meet the optimal level set by the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) of 0.7 part per million, or 0.7 milligram of fluoride per liter of water, mg/L. This level is recommended by the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

**SOURCES**

Fluoride is an abundant- naturally occurring element found in rocks, soil, and fresh and ocean water. When fluoride is present in drinking water at optimal levels, it has been shown to promote oral health by preventing tooth decay. The amount of natural fluoride in water supplies is generally not enough to provide oral health benefits. Water fluoridation is the addition of small amounts of fluoride to a water supply to achieve the optimal fluoride level that helps prevent tooth decay.

**MONITORING AND TREATMENT**

Drinking water quality is regulated by established Maximum Contaminant Levels (MCLs) for the protection of public health. The Division of Drinking Water of the SWRCB regulates fluoride levels in public drinking water systems and as of April 2015, the optimal level for fluoride is 0.7 mg/L. The regulatory limit for fluoride is 2.0 mg/L. The SFPUC routinely monitors for the levels of fluoride in drinking water to meet the state regulation and submits fluoride monitoring results each month, which are publicly available and accessed here: [http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/drinking\\_water/certlic/drinkingwater/Fluoridation.shtml](http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/drinking_water/certlic/drinkingwater/Fluoridation.shtml). To learn more about specific information regarding drinking water standards, please refer to the SWRCB website at [http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/drinking\\_water/certlic/drinkingwater/Chemicalcontaminants.shtml](http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/drinking_water/certlic/drinkingwater/Chemicalcontaminants.shtml).

**HEALTH CONSIDERATIONS**

San Francisco residents have been drinking fluoridated water for more than 50 years with no known and/or apparent adverse health impacts. Water fluoridation is a widely accepted practice proven to be safe and effective for preventing and controlling tooth decay. Medical and dental experts endorse water fluoridation as the single, most effective public health measure to improve oral health. Fluoride in levels administered for drinking water is safe for

humans and all animals. Through more than 50 years of extensive research, drinking fluoridated water has been scientifically proven to be safe and effective.

Fluoridated water benefits the entire community, children and adults of all ages, especially low-income and underserved populations. Infants fed formula mixed with water containing fluoride at the optimal level recommended by the CDC may have an increased chance of developing tiny white lines or streaks in their teeth. These marks are referred to as mild to very mild fluorosis, and are often only visible under a microscope. Even in cases where the marks are visible, they do not pose any health risk. CDC considers it safe to use optimally fluoridated water for preparing infant formula.

To lessen this chance of dental fluorosis, you may choose to use low-fluoride bottled water to prepare infant formula. Nevertheless, children may still develop dental fluorosis due to fluoride intake from other sources such as food, toothpaste and dental products. For additional information on community water fluoridation providing an overview on infant formula and fluorosis, please visit the CDC

website: [http://www.cdc.gov/fluoridation/safety/infant\\_formula.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/fluoridation/safety/infant_formula.htm)

## **REFERENCES**

SFPUC: “Annual Report”

<http://sfwater.org/index.aspx?page=634>

SFPUC: “Public Health Debate on Fluoridation”

<http://sfwater.org/index.aspx?page=470>

SFPUC: “Public Health Information on Fluoridation”

<http://sfwater.org/index.aspx?page=471>

San Francisco Department of Public Health: “San Francisco Children’s Oral Health Strategic Plan 2014-2017”

[http://assets.thehcn.net/content/sites/sanfrancisco/Final\\_document\\_Nov\\_2014\\_20141126111021.pdf](http://assets.thehcn.net/content/sites/sanfrancisco/Final_document_Nov_2014_20141126111021.pdf)

CDPH: “Community Water Fluoridation Program”

<http://www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/pages/communitywaterfluoridationprogram.aspx>

SWRCB: “Annual Report”

[http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/drinking\\_water/certlic/drinkingwater/Fluoridation.shtml](http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/drinking_water/certlic/drinkingwater/Fluoridation.shtml)

SWRCB: “Chemicals and Contaminants in Drinking Water”

[http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/drinking\\_water/certlic/drinkingwater/Chemicalcontaminants.shtml](http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/drinking_water/certlic/drinkingwater/Chemicalcontaminants.shtml)

CDC: “Community Water Fluoridation”

<http://www.cdc.gov/fluoridation/>

American Academy of Family Physicians: “Fluoridation of Public Water Supplies”

<http://www.aafp.org/about/policies/all/fluoride.html>

American Academy of Pediatrics: “Dental Health”

<http://ilikemyteeth.org/>

### **CONTACT US**

If you still have concerns about the quality of water and would like to report emergency water quality issues, please call our 24-hour hotline at 3-1-1 (within SF only) or 415-701-2311. You can also visit <http://www.sf311.org/>.