

## **Pennsylvania Falls Behind in Protecting Dental Health**

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention calls fluoride one of the ten great public health discoveries of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Nearly an entire decade into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, though, Pennsylvania remains at the back of the pack when it comes to optimizing the level of this naturally occurring element in our drinking water.

Decades of research show that having fluoride at optimal levels can reduce dental cavities by 20 to 40 percent. The U.S. Surgeon General reports every dollar spent on adding fluoride to drinking water saves \$38 in health care costs. Low income people and those without dental insurance may benefit the most, since they are least likely to regularly see a dentist.

For Pennsylvania taxpayers, this could mean substantial savings. In 2007, state taxpayers spent more than \$165 million on dental treatments for low income residents on Medicaid.

Pennsylvania is falling further behind in providing dental health benefits and containing health care and taxpayers costs by failing to optimize fluoride in its drinking water.

Consider the facts:

- From 1992 to 2006, the percentage of Americans served by public water supplies that optimize fluoride levels rose from 62.1% to 69.2%.
- In half the states, 77% of residents have properly fluoridated water.
- Pennsylvania is 41<sup>st</sup> in percentage of residents with optimally fluoridated water, with only 54.0% of our population served by public water supplies that optimize fluoride.
- The percent of Pennsylvanians having optimally fluoridated water actually dropped by .2% from 2000 to 2006.

More than 250 organizations, individuals and foundations have formed PAFluorideNow, to get the message out that optimizing fluoride levels in drinking water improves public health, helps control health care costs, and saves tax dollars.

A bill in the state Legislature, HB 1649, with support from both Democrats and Republicans, would mandate all public water systems in the state with at least 500 connections optimize fluoride levels.

For more information on this issue, and to find out how you can help, visit [www.pafluoridenow.org](http://www.pafluoridenow.org) today.