

Phoenix and Milwaukee to continue to fluoridate their water supplies

Two major US cities with fluoridation schemes - Phoenix and Milwaukee - have decided to continue to add fluoride to their water supplies.

In September 2012, a Phoenix city council sub-committee affirmed its existing policy of fluoridating the drinking water supplied to around 1.4 million residents. The city has been benefiting from fluoridation since 1990.

President of the Arizona Dental Association, Dr Gary Jones, said the sub-committee members should be applauded for making their decision based on the best science.

Dr. Donald Altman, Arizona Dental Association member and Phoenix public health dentist, told the subcommittee that many studies on community water fluoridation had shown that it is a safe, cost-effective and healthy way to prevent dental decay in children and adults.

Other experts who addressed the subcommittee in support of fluoridation included Will Humble, director of the Arizona Department of Health Services; Dr. Howard Pollick, clinical professor at the University of California San Francisco, consultant to the National Fluoridation Advisory Committee and an American Dental Association spokesperson on fluoridation; and Dr. Jack Dillenberg, dean of the Arizona School of Dentistry and Oral Health in Mesa.



Phoenix, Arizona

Commenting after the decision had been taken, council member Thelda Williams said the medical community had provided sufficient evidence to show that adding fluoride to water has a public health benefit.

Sharon Zastrow, from the American Dental Hygienists' Association, said: "Phoenix is a city with a large, socio-economically challenged population that has limited or no access to dental care. Fluoridated water offers some protection in early childhood tooth development to strengthen tooth enamel, and studies show that fluoridated water does prevent caries."

She added: "With high sugar food and drink choices being the most economical choice for those living below the poverty level, any protection that city government can provide its citizens in the prevention of tooth decay is a 'win-win'."

In July, 2012 Milwaukee city council also voted to continue with fluoridation. Welcoming the decision, the director of the Wisconsin Dental Association Mark Paget said: "Over the last 65 years, water fluoridation has proven to be safe, effective and economical - truly one of public health's greatest achievements."

In reaching its decision, Milwaukee city council opted to reduce the target fluoride concentration in its water supply from 1.1 parts per million to 0.7 parts per million, reflecting proposals issued for consultation in January 2011 by the US Department of Health and Human Services.

Whilst no firm decisions have yet been announced by the Department, and whilst the federal recommendations on fluoride levels are for guidance only rather than mandatory regulations, a Milwaukee councillor who had originally argued in favour of stopping the local scheme altogether changed his mind and, with the backing of the rest of the council, proposed adopting the 0.7 ppm concentration for the city.



Milwaukee, Wisconsin