



NEWS RELEASE

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American Fluoridation Society to Support Communities' Efforts To Share the Facts and Counter Misinformation about Fluoride

Group's Leader: "AFS Will Be Active Both Online and On the Ground"

Although the leading [health, medical and scientific organizations](#) continue to recommend community water fluoridation as a valuable tool to reduce tooth decay rates, anti-fluoride groups are circulating misinformation online that can confuse or needlessly frighten the public. To combat this, a group of dental and medical professionals have created the American Fluoridation Society (AFS), seeking to debunk myths and clarify the evidence behind fluoridation's safety and benefits.

The AFS aims to build a broad coalition of health professionals, parents and other Americans who value science and want to advance health and wellness. The AFS will provide testimony and technical assistance to state and local communities that are seeking to start fluoridation or defend the practice against attacks. Last fall, roughly a half-dozen communities voted on ballot measures related to fluoridation.

Fluoridated water [reaches](#) nearly 75 percent of Americans whose homes are served by community water systems, over 210 million people. Yet this percentage is below 50 percent in eight states. In recent years, critics have used [myths](#) and [conspiracy theories](#) to try to pressure local communities into ceasing water fluoridation.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has [praised](#) fluoridation as one of the "10 great public health achievements of the 20th century." CDC reports that consuming fluoridated water reduces decay by 25% above and beyond the positive impact of fluoride in toothpaste or other products. The U.S. Community Preventive Services Task Force—an independent panel of experts—[recommends](#) fluoridation "based on strong evidence" that it reduces the incidence of tooth decay. Nonetheless, Internet-savvy critics are trying to use the web to confuse the public and distort the scientific evidence.

Dr. Johnny Johnson, a pediatric dentist who is AFS's president, says the organization will move aggressively to assist communities that want to share the facts about fluoride. "AFS will be active both online and on the ground," he declared.

Attempts by critics to link fluoride to communism in the 1950s have morphed into new types of conspiracy talk. A few years ago, the *New York Times* [reported](#) on this development: "While conspiracy theories about fluoride in public water supplies have circulated since the early days of the John Birch Society, they now thrive online, where anyone, with a little help from Google, can suddenly become a medical authority."

Dr. Johnson knows firsthand how critics of fluoridation can confuse the public and elected officials. “In Pinellas County, Florida—where I live—a handful of people worked behind the scenes to circulate a lot of inaccurate information, and health professionals were caught off guard when a vote was taken to stop fluoridation,” said Dr. Johnson. “Eventually, we were able to [reverse that decision](#), but no community should have to go through that experience.”

Although cavity rates have fallen significantly over the past 50 years, Dr. Johnson warned that Americans cannot take good oral health for granted.

“Before fluoride was added to water and toothpaste, tooth decay was a sad and painful fact of life for nearly all Americans,” Dr. Johnson explained. “Although we see fewer cavities today, tooth decay remains the [most common](#) chronic disease for children and adults. This is no time to end fluoridation—a tool that one foundation [called](#) “the single greatest discovery in the history of dental medicine.’”

“It’s time for people who care about health and wellness to stand firm, join together and speak out,” he added.

AFS has received a grant from Delta Dental Foundation of California, and Dr. Johnson said his organization will seek additional funding from other foundations and individual donors. In addition to Dr. Johnson, AFS’s officers include: Dr. Myron Allukian, Jr., a Massachusetts dentist who serves as Vice President; Dr. Chuck Haynie, an Oregon physician who serves as Secretary; Dr. Kurt Ferre, an Oregon dentist who serves as Treasurer; and Dr. Steve Slott, a North Carolina dentist who serves as Information Director.

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For more information on fluoridation, visit these websites:

American Dental Association

<http://www.ada.org/en/public-programs/advocating-for-the-public/fluoride-and-fluoridation/fluoridation-facts>

Campaign for Dental Health/American Academy of Pediatrics

<http://ilikemyteeth.org/> (English)

<http://spanish.ilikemyteeth.org> (Spanish)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

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