

Fluoride in drinking water cuts tooth decay in adults

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(Medical Xpress)—An international study conducted by researchers at the University of Adelaide has resulted in the strongest evidence yet that fluoride in drinking water provides dental health benefits to adults.

In the first population-level study of its kind in the world, researchers have found that fluoridated drinking water is preventing tooth decay for all adults regardless of age - and significantly for people who have had exposure to fluoride for most of their lives.

Conducted by the Australian Research Centre for Population [Oral Health](#) (ARCPOH) at the University of Adelaide's School of Dentistry, the study adds to the established evidence that fluoride in drinking water has [dental health](#) benefits for children.

The study looked at data from a random sample of 3800 Australians aged 15 and over. The results are now published online in the international [Journal of Dental Research](#).

"By looking right across the Australian population, we now have good evidence that fluoride in drinking water is effective in preventing tooth decay in adults," says co-author Professor Kaye Roberts-Thomson, Director of ARCPOH at the University of Adelaide.

"We've known for some time that fluoridated drinking water can prevent tooth decay in children, but this is the first time that research has conclusively shown this in an [adult population](#)."

The results show that adults with more than a 75% [lifetime exposure](#) to water fluoridation have significantly reduced tooth decay (up to 30% less) when compared with those with less than 25% lifetime exposure.

"Those people who have had longer exposure to fluoride in water obviously will have the greater benefit. However, and this is an important aspect of the study, even those people who were born before water fluoridation existed have since received some benefit in their lifetimes," Professor Roberts-Thomson says.

"Given the ongoing controversy surrounding fluoridated water, especially in some parts of Australia, we should point out that the evidence is stacked in favour of long-term exposure to fluoride in drinking water. It really does have a significant dental health impact."

More information: jdr.sagepub.com/content/early/.../01/0022034513481190

Provided by University of Adelaide

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