

It's not just a kid thing: Fluoridated tap water benefits older adults even more

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The benefits of fluoridation in preventing tooth decay have been known for over half a century and today approximately two-thirds of Americans have access to fluoridated public water.

Gerardo Maupomé, B.D.S., M.Sc., Ph.D., of the Indiana University School of Dentistry, Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis, and colleagues report in a study published in the Fall issue of the Journal of Public Health Dentistry that older adults benefit even more significantly from fluoridation than children.

Dr. Maupomé and his colleagues investigated whether access to fluoridated community water reduced the amounts of dental fillings and associated costs needed by children, adults, and older adults. All three groups benefited, with older adults benefiting the most.

Participants in the study were all members of a dental health maintenance organization and so had access to dental care through dental insurance. “Our finding that fluoridated water lowered the number of dental fillings confirms studies on younger people but breaks new ground on older individuals. While those we studied had dental insurance, many older adults, who are often retired, don’t have dental insurance and so prevention of decay is very important. Community water fluoridation is a sound public health investment for people of all ages,” said Dr. Maupomé, who is also a Regenstrief Institute, Inc. affiliated scientist.

“Much of the focus of research on community water fluoridation has been on children. There has been significantly less research on adults and even less on older adults. Individuals are keeping their teeth through adulthood into their older years. We need to study dental health through all decades of life,” said Dr. Maupomé.

Source: Indiana University

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