

## Fluoridation Fact Sheet

### Mount Gambier Fluoride Project

**Q. *What is the Mount Gambier Fluoridation Project?***

On behalf of SA Health, SA Water is about to start fluoridating water sourced from the Blue Lake for the Mount Gambier community. This is an oral health initiative by the State Government to fluoridate the drinking water supplied to Mount Gambier.

**Q. *Why will Mount Gambier's drinking water be fluoridated?***

Fluoride safely and effectively protects teeth from decay and adding it to drinking water is the most effective way to enable everyone to have the benefits of fluoride. Mount Gambier is the largest centre in South Australia without water fluoridation.

**Q. *What is water fluoridation?***

Almost all water supplies contain natural fluoride. Some groundwater supplies, such as those at Millicent and Naracoorte, have natural fluoride at concentrations that protect dental health. Many other areas, including Mount Gambier, do not have sufficient levels of natural fluoride so additional fluoride needs to be added. Water fluoridation involves boosting concentrations to the level that provides dental health benefits.

**Q. *How does fluoride work?***

Fluoride in water acts like a repair kit for teeth, working in a number of ways to strengthen teeth and make them more resistant to tooth decay in people of all ages.

Strong teeth result in fewer fillings, fewer extractions, fewer visits to the dentist and lower dental bills - resulting in healthy smiles and fewer dentures.

**Q. *What are the benefits of adding fluoride to Mount Gambier's water supply?***

Children who live in areas supplied with fluoridated water have less tooth decay. A survey in 2004 showed that children in Mount Gambier have 78 percent more decay than children from Adelaide, which has been fluoridated since 1971.

**Q. *How will the water be fluoridated?***

A small treatment plant has been constructed at the Blue Lake. The plant carefully adds controlled amounts of fluoride into water that has been pumped out of the Blue Lake. Fluoride is not added directly into the Blue Lake.

**Q. *Will I be able to smell or taste the fluoride?***

No. Fluoridated water does not smell or taste different to non-fluoridated water.

**Q. Is it safe to drink water with fluoride?**

Yes. Many organisations, including the World Health Organization and Australia's National Health and Medical Research Council, endorse water fluoridation as a safe and effective public health measure. The US Centres for Disease Control and Prevention rated fluoridation one of the 10 most important public health achievements of the twentieth century.

**Q. Can I still use mains water for other purposes, such as re-filling fish tanks or swimming pools?**

Yes. Mains water can still be used in exactly the same way as it was prior to a fluoridated water supply.

**Q. What safeguards are in place to ensure over-dosing doesn't occur?**

There are several controls that help ensure that the correct amount of fluoride is added. The fluoride levels in the water supplied to consumers are monitored continuously every day at the plant and samples of water are also taken throughout the distribution system by SA Water to check the concentration of fluoride 'at the tap'.

Similar fluoridation systems in Adelaide and most regional areas of South Australia have been adding fluoride to drinking water for many years.

**Q. When will fluoride be added to Mount Gambier's drinking water supply?**

Fluoride will begin to be introduced to the city's water supply on the 14th October 2010. Minor work will continue on the site over the coming months.

*If you would like more information about water fluoridation please contact SA Health on 8226 7100, or for information regarding the treatment facility please contact SA Water on 1800 812 362.*



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