

Fluoride in drinking water

How much fluoride is in drinking water?

All South West Water supplies have a naturally occurring level of fluoride which is below 0.1 milligrams per litre.

Is fluoride added to drinking water?

Fluoride is not currently added to drinking water in the South West Water supply area. Less than 10% of the population of England and Wales (predominantly people living in the west midlands, north east and north west of England) receive fluoridated water.

What are the health implications of fluoride?

Teeth are strengthened against acid attack by absorbing tiny amounts of fluoride. This can happen by eating and drinking food products that contain fluoride while teeth are developing - up to the age of 16 to 18 years. Teeth are also strengthened by fluoride in saliva throughout life. This is most commonly achieved by using toothpastes containing fluoride.

The potential benefits of adding fluoride to drinking water to improve dental health has been recognised by numerous national and international organisations including the World Health Organisation. Current evidence suggests that there are beneficial effects but also highlights the potential problem of dental fluorosis, a condition resulting in the mottled appearance of teeth.

Will drinking water in the south west be fluoridated in future?

It is the responsibility of each region's Strategic Health Authority (SHA) to identify areas where fluoridation may be beneficial.

Section 58 of the Water Act 2003 states that water companies have a duty to fluoridate when asked to by a SHA. In 2004, draft regulations were published setting out how SHAs should consult local people on the decision to fluoridate water supplies. The Regulations require SHAs to publish any proposals to fluoridate in the local media, and consult on the decision for three months. Only if the response to the proposals was predominantly in favour of fluoridation, would an SHA ask a water company to fluoridate drinking water.

Further advice

If you have any further queries regarding water quality or require further information, please contact us on the freephone number below.

Customer services helpline: 0800 169 1144, Minicom: 0800 169 9965

Relevant facts:

Fluoridation is the addition of fluoride to water supplies, raising the level to approximately one milligram per litre.

If dental decay is detected early, your dentist can advise of **dietary changes** which can be made to increase your fluoride intake.

The Water Supply (Water Quality) Regulations 2000 permits a **maximum fluoride concentration** of 1.5 milligrams per litre.

The British Dental Foundation advises that it is important to clean your teeth at least twice a day – especially last thing at night. Two minutes is usually enough to clean teeth and remove plaque.