**Why Northland should stay fluoride free**

**What is fluoride and fluoridation?**

* Fluoride is a toxic substance naturally found in small concentrations in groundwater, soil and the oceans. It is a poison, like arsenic and lead, which can interfere with the life and structure of living things.
* Fluoridation is the addition of fluoride to a community water supply to harden teeth but this practice is not supported by sound medical science. It is mass medication – prescription by Council.
* The forms of fluoride added to water treatment plants in New Zealand are impure, untested and contaminated industrial by-products.
* There is no clinical management or health monitoring of individuals subjected to fluoridation. This is mass medication against all the principles of using prescribed doses of medicines to treat people’s health problems.

**What is fluoridation supposed to do?**

* Fluoride swallowed with water is supposed to improve dental health by delivering fluoride through blood to teeth to make enamel hard enough to stop decay. We now know that it doesn’t work this way. It works by being applied to the tooth surface in high concentrations. The US Centers for Disease Control says that any benefit comes from putting fluoride on to the surface of teeth and not from swallowing it.
* The Ministry of Health, district health boards and many dentists talk of large percentage improvements in dental health with fluoridation but modern research shows there is little, if any. The Ministry of Health’s own data show at most half a filling difference by age 12 – and that is doubtful.

**Does fluoridation help people in need who can’t afford other dental health care?**

* Not really. The most exhaustive survey of fluoridation literature, *The York Review,* says that there is little evidence to show that water fluoridation has reduced social inequalities in dental health. The claim that it will especially help the socially deprived is wishful thinking.

**Is fluoridation value for money?**

* Fluoridation is hugely wasteful as most fluoridated water goes straight down drains. Only a fraction of 1% is swallowed by people and from a value for ratepayers viewpoint it is concerning that councils resolve to implement it. On a simple cost/benefit basis councils should not implement fluoridation.

**What else can fluoride do?**

* Fluoride accumulates in bones over time to the point of brittleness with increased risk of bone fracture in old age.
* There is also firm evidence that it affects the pineal gland. This advances the onset of menstruation in girls and increases breast cancer risk. It can cause a rare bone cancer (particularly in boys), reduce intelligence levels in children, cause premature births with associated complications and higher death rates, affect the ways that kidneys and the thyroid work and other bad stuff.
* Fluoridation is not worth these documented health risks.

**Are there any other problems with fluoridation?**

* Although the amount of fluoride in drinking water can nearly always be controlled, the actual dose received by each member of the public is uncontrolled. It is therefore unsafe, because it depends on how much water or other fluoride-containing foods or drinks each person takes in.
* Fluoridation at any level is uncontrolled dosing with a poison which accumulates in the bodies of humans and animals as well as in soil and plants.
* Fluoridated drinking water contains up to 200 times more fluoride than breast milk. As a result, babies drinking formula made with fluoridated tap water are exposed to much higher levels of fluoride than a breast-fed infant. Taking into account its size a baby drinking fluoridated formula receives the highest dosageof fluoride among all age groups in the population whereas a breast-fed infant receives the lowest.
* Fluoride is not essential for nourishment. No disease has ever been linked to a fluoride deficiency.
* Humans can have perfectly good teeth without fluoride so why do the health agencies and councils waste taxes and rates on the practice of adding it to a community water supply?

**Is fluoridation fair to everyone?**

* Definitely not. This is where a council gets it very badly wrong if it chooses a referendum to resolve a fluoridation debate as this fails to address the key ethical issues around fluoridation.
* Even clear majorities of voters in a referendum should not be able to determine that the rest are forced against their will to take a health-affecting toxin, at any concentration, in their drinking water. If you are sick – you don’t ask a stranger to vote on your medication so why should fluoridation be any different?
* Those who believe in fluoride treatment for teeth can have it clinically and carefully prescribed by a doctor so to achieve the greatest good for the greatest number fluoridation should be abandoned or resisted by councils.

**Is fluoridation used world-wide?**

* No. Most European countries don’t fluoridate and neither does Japan. World Health Organization data shows that it doesn’t matter whether a community is fluoridated or not there is improvement in dental health at about the same rate – if not faster in some non-fluoridated communities.

**Why does the Ministry of Health, health boards and many dentists strongly promote fluoridation?**

* Given rapidly advancing knowledge on the overall effect of fluoride in the body, not just teeth, this is very hard to understand as in spite of beliefs about the benefits of fluoride from the 1940s and 1950s fluoride has proven to have limited, if any, benefit to teeth when swallowed. Those who have built their careers and professional status on fluoridation cannot credibly assess the evidence against it. Dentists are taught 50 year out-of-date theories about fluoride which they accept and support fluoridation wrongly believing it will help people. If they speak against it they are often condemned by their colleagues. DHBs are directed by the Ministry of Health to promote fluoridation whether they agree with it or not.
* Although the US Centers for Disease Control says that any benefit comes from putting fluoride on to the surface of teeth and not from swallowing it even this is not necessary with good diet and tooth brushing especially as any fluoride is a risk to the health of several parts of the body.
* Lack of fluoride does not cause tooth decay - poor diet does and all the fluoride in the world won’t help. Fluoride cannot fix a poor diet but it can and does damage the surface of children's teeth.

**Where can I find more information about fluoridation?**

Three excellent websites with extensive and reliable information are:

<http://fluoridefree.org.nz/> [www.fluoridealert.org](http://www.fluoridealert.org) [www.slweb.org](http://www.slweb.org/bibliography.html)

**What do experts say about fluoridation?**

* **Dr Hardy Limeback**, former Associate Professor and Head, Preventive Dentistry, University of Toronto, and panel member for the National Research Council report on ‘Fluoride in Drinking Water’ (NRC, 2006)

*“. . . we now know that fluoride doesn’t need to be swallowed, that the public has to be informed. They should be told that it doesn’t work by swallowing it.”*

* **Dr** **Robert Isaacson,** panel member, NRC 2006.

*“As far as I can see, there’s no doubt that the intake of fluoridated water is going to interrupt basic functions of nerve cells in the brain, and this is certainly not going to be [for] the benefit of anybody.”*

* **Dr Arvid Carlsson**, Nobel Laureate in Medicine (2000) and official advisor to the Swedish Government.

*”Fluoridation is against all modern principles of pharmacology. It’s obsolete. I don’t think anybody, not a single dentist would bring up this question in Sweden anymore.”*

* **Dr John Colquhoun**, former dental health officer for Auckland and former editor of the international journal *Fluoride*, who on the basis of firm evidence became one of the most articulate critics of fluoridation.

***“It is my best judgement, reached with a high degree of scientific certainty, that fluoridation is invalid in theory and ineffective in practice as a preventive of dental caries. It is dangerous to the health of consumers.”***

**Hopefully Northland will stay fluoride free**

(Ross Forbes, 28 November, 2015)