

Fluoride in your water

Water quality factsheet 3

We're often asked questions about fluoride in drinking water.

This factsheet explains more about fluoride and our responsibilities at South West Water.

We take water quality seriously at South West Water. This is one of a series of factsheets about water quality – you can find more factsheets at southwestwater.co.uk

What is fluoride?

Fluoride is a naturally occurring substance that appears in very small quantities in water, as well as in many foods and drinks. It strengthens teeth and makes them more resistant to decay.

Does South west Water add fluoride to water?

No. We don't currently add fluoride to our water.

In England and Wales, less than 10% of the population have fluoride added to their water, mainly in the West Midlands, North East and North West of England.

The amount of fluoride that naturally occurs in water varies from region to region. At South West Water, our water has a low naturally occurring level of fluoride that is below 0.1 milligrams per litre.

The current Water Supply Regulations allow a maximum level of 1.5 milligrams of fluoride per litre. The process of adding fluoride to water is called fluoridation.

Why don't you add fluoride to water?

Fluoride and dental health

Fluoride is sometimes added to water to improve dental health, an approach recommended by numerous international organisations including the World Health Organisation.

Even though fluoride has many benefits, too much fluoride can lead to a mottled appearance on teeth (a condition called dental fluorosis). It is especially important that children don't have too much fluoride when their teeth are developing.

Who decides whether we should add fluoride to water?

In England and Wales, it is up to the medical profession to identify whether the water in an area should have fluoride added to it. They will make a recommendation based on the overall dental health of the population in that area.

If the local medical professionals for our area decide that we should add fluoride to our water, we have a legal requirement to do so. However, they have to consult the local population before any decisions can be made. They can only ask us to add fluoride to the water if the response to the proposals are predominantly in favour.

At the moment, there are no plans to add fluoride to the water that we supply.

How else can I get more fluoride?

You should talk to your dentist about whether you need to increase the amount of fluoride you are getting.

It's naturally found in water, and many other food and drinks (like fish and tea), but most people get their main fluoride intake from toothpaste. Your dentist will recommend ways for you to get more fluoride if they think it's necessary.

