

Oral Health Update Fall 2014

Peterborough County-City
HEALTH UNIT
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Lawsuit Targeting Fluoride in Durham Water Fails

On August 29, 2014 Deputy Judge W. Mark Burch dismissed a lawsuit that challenged Durham Region's practice of supplementing municipal water supplies with fluoride.

The small claims suit was launched by a Whitby resident who sought compensation for the cost of a water filtration system (\$900), which he said he installed to remove fluoride from the tap water in his home. A trial began in January 2014, and then was adjourned to August 29.

The Region replied that Durham's drinking water is safe, and that fluoridation is an effective means of fighting tooth decay, particularly among children. Mr. Brown failed to prove he'd sustained any injuries as a result of fluoridation, Region lawyer R. Arti Sanichara said.



You likely receive questions from clients about fluoride from time to time. Here are some common myths debunked:

Fluoride Q&As

Q: Breast milk contains very low levels of fluoride – doesn't that mean fluoride must be bad for babies?

A: No. The premise that "because it occurs in nature, it must be right" is also known as the "Naturalistic Fallacy". Anti-fluoride activist Dr. Connett recently visited Peterborough and applied this fallacy to argue that fluoride is toxic because it occurs in low levels in breast milk, stating that "it's nature's way of saying keep it away from the baby". However, this thinking doesn't stand up to logic. Breast milk has low levels of other trace elements that are biologically required, such as zinc, and iron, yet a combinations of reasons (higher bioavailability and effective conservation of nutrients in the breastfed baby), result in similar nutrient profiles in babies. For instance, although breast milk has low levels of iron, breastfed babies maintain their iron status as the same levels as babies receiving formula supplemented with iron.

Q: Does fluoride lower the IQ of children?

A: No. Like many other nutrients and substances, fluoride can be toxic if consumed in large doses, but toxic levels cannot be reached by drinking fluoridated water. The current maximum acceptable concentration of 1.5 mg of fluoride per litre of drinking water (about twice the level found in Peterborough's drinking water) is far below the level that could potentially cause any adverse health effects, including neurotoxicity.

A 2012 review of studies that found "a possibility of an adverse effect of high fluoride exposure on children's neurodevelopment", was subsequently criticized in *The Lancet* for serious methodological flaws. Often referred to as the "Harvard study" and cited by anti-fluoridation activists, it refers mostly to studies done in China, where naturally occurring fluoride levels are much higher than the levels found in Canadian drinking water. In fact, a prospective trial done in New Zealand, and published in the May 2014 issue of the *American Journal of Public Health*, followed a large population for 38 years and found no link between IQ results and fluoride exposure, whether through drinking water, toothpaste or supplements.

Q: Fluoride is only beneficial to teeth when applied topically, so why ingest it?

A: Despite claims by anti-fluoride activists that the effect of fluoride is only topical, research supports the role of fluoride in strengthening the enamel of teeth that are still developing, below the gums, before they have erupted. Children who had the benefit of drinking fluoridated water before their permanent teeth erupted have been found to have some ongoing protection against dental decay, even after the fluoride was discontinued.

For helpful fact sheets on fluoride for parents and children, please visit www.pcchu.ca, "My Community" and click on "Fluoride in Drinking Water"

Healthy Smiles Ontario Expands Income Threshold

Did you know that the financial threshold for eligibility criteria for Healthy Smiles Ontario has expanded? Please advise your patients to call us at 705-748-2230 to find out if they qualify for dental coverage.

Who is eligible?

Children 17 and under may be eligible if:

- They are residents of Ontario
- They are members of households that meet the income eligibility requirements
- They do not have access to any form of dental coverage (including other government funded programs such as Ontario Works)

Ministry Integration of Dental Health Programs for Children

Beginning August 2015, the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care will improve access to publicly-funded dental services by streamlining the current range of programs available for low-income children. Children In Need Of Treatment (CINOT) and the social assistance dental programs for children, along with Healthy Smiles Ontario will all be integrated into one program. Integrating these programs will enable:

- A new simplified enrolment and renewal process for clients
- Client access to a full range of dental services, including preventive care, such as cleanings, as well as basic care, such as fillings, extractions and x-rays
- Expansion of dental coverage for up to a full year – all children who are members of an Ontario Works or Ontario Disability Support Program benefit unit will automatically be eligible for dental benefits for one year even if the benefit period closes earlier. Currently, children covered under Ontario Works for one month will have access to dental care for one month. It is planned that effective August 2015, even if a child is covered under Ontario Works for one month, dental care benefits will be available for 12 months.
- Dental claims processing and administration to be provided by a third party administrator (obtained through a public procurement process by the Ministry)
- 100% provincial funding with oversight and governance by the Ministry

Contact Us:

Community Dental Health Centre

(Mobile Dental Health Centre,
Healthy Smiles Ontario claims,
clinic appointments, eligibility)
30-60 George Street, N.,
Peterborough Square Mall
Peterborough, ON K9H 7E7
705-748-2230

Oral Health Program Administration

(payments, billings, school screening
program, CINOT)
10 Hospital Drive
Peterborough, ON K9J 8M1
705-743-1000, ext. 273

www.pcchu.ca/dental