

FACT SHEET: FLUORIDE IN DRINKING WATER



Prevent. Promote. Protect.

Fluoride is found naturally in private wells in Marion County. Fluoride plays an important role in dental health and preventing tooth decay. However, too much fluoride in the drinking water can be harmful. The US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) sets different levels that can be used as guidelines when interpreting your fluoride level. The EPA recommends that the fluoride level not exceed 2 parts per million (ppm) and sets the Maximum Contaminant Level at 4 ppb. The following guide can be used to determine where your level falls on the scale and what actions may be appropriate.

IF YOUR FLUORIDE LEVEL IS:

▶ **LESS THAN 0.7 PPM**

- This level of fluoride is low and does not protect teeth from decay.
- **Action:** Talk to your dentist about fluoride supplements for children.

▶ **BETWEEN 0.7 PPM TO 1.2 PPM**

- **This level of fluoride protects teeth from decay.**
- **Action:** No fluoride supplements should be taken if you have fluoride in your water. Stop the use of fluoride supplements until you talk to your dentist about the proper levels of fluoride supplements for your family.

▶ **BETWEEN 1.2 AND 4.0 PPM**

- This level of fluoride may cause **dental fluorosis** (brown staining and pitting of teeth) in children with long-term use.
- The EPA considers this condition to be a cosmetic problem and not a health risk.
- **Action:** Stop the use of fluoride supplements. You need to test your well to see what the level of fluoride is in your drinking water.

▶ **GREATER THAN 4.0 PPM**

- This level of fluoride is a dangerous level for children and adults to drink.
- Children and adults are at risk for **skeletal fluorosis** (a serious bone disorder) with long-term use.
- **Action:** You will need to find another drinking water source or install a treatment system to remove fluoride from your drinking water.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

<http://www.cdc.gov/fluoridation/faqs/wellwater.htm>

<http://water.epa.gov/drink/contaminants/basicinformation/fluoride.cfm>