

DVGW Statement on the Fluoridation of Drinking Water

Recent events have caused the DVGW to review its 1974 statement on the fluoridation of drinking water and to publish an updated version.

Fluoridated drinking water has been available since the end of the sixties to consumers in several cities in the former GDR, including Chemnitz, Magdeburg and Erfurt. The legal basis for this was the Second Implementing Regulation of the "Ordinance Regulating the Hygienic Monitoring of Central Water Supply Systems – Hygienic Monitoring of Drinking Water Fluoridation" (Law Gazette of the GDR, Part II, 1970, 659). Due to the transitional regulations of Dec. 18, 1990 implementing EC law (Federal Law Gazette I, 1990, 2915-2926) drinking water continued to be supplied under the old law in the territory of the former GDR until Dec. 31, 1992.

The addition of fluoride to drinking water in the old federal Länder is addressed in Section 37 para 2 no. 5 of the Act on the general reform of food legislation (Act on food and materials coming into contact with food – Lebensmittel- und Bedarfsgegenständegesetz, LMBG) of 1974 (Federal Law Gazette, Part I, 1974, 1945-1966). According to this law, the "addition of fluorides to drinking water to prevent caries" may be permitted upon request in individual cases as an exception to the legal provisions if the facts justify the assumption that there are no health risks. The Land governments are authorized to regulate the conditions and the procedure for such exceptions more precisely in statutory rules and orders. The governments of the Länder include appropriate authorities

responsible for the approval of such exceptions.

Since the effective date of the LMBG on Jan. 1, 1975, no Land government has laid down such statutory rules and orders.

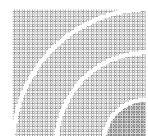
After the water supply companies in the new federal Länder ceased the practice of adding fluorides to drinking water, relevant professional bodies have expressed the fear that this could result in an increase in the incidence of caries.

Therefore the DVGW feels bound to publish a new statement, even though there is no new basic evidence since the mid-seventies that would induce the DVGW to revise its position as stated at that time. Two comprehensive studies of the literature illustrate this. These studies assess scientific publications on the subject of drinking water fluoridation over the last fifteen years.

These studies of the literature will be included in the DVGW series of publications on water for the information of water supply companies and specialists in the population.

The position of the DVGW concerning drinking water fluoridation is as follows:

1. Drinking water is a food. It is the duty of water companies to supply drinking water that meets all requirements of a food. This means that drinking water must be of such a quality that there are no known adverse health effects resulting from its consumption or use.



Compliance with DIN 2000 and the Drinking Water Ordinance guarantee this.

It is not the task of water supply companies to add substances to drinking water intended as prophylactics against illness not caused by drinking water.

The DVGW therefore is against the addition of fluorides to drinking water.

2. Caries is not the manifestation of a fluoride deficiency, but is the result of a generally false nutrition and inefficient dental hygiene. Unwholesome habits resulting in caries are not eliminated by the fluoridation of drinking water; on the contrary, they are promoted.
3. The suggested optimal fluoride concentration of 1 mg per litre is very close to the dose with which long term detrimental effects in people cannot be excluded. The limit of fluoride as specified in the Drinking Water Ordinance is 1,5 mg per litre.

The very small difference between the concentration regarded as beneficial as a prophylactic and the limit value in drinking water cannot be justified in view of different habits and therefore differing consumption of drinking water and the uncontrolled intake of

fluorides from other sources. The safety of a lifelong accumulation of fluoride in the human body as a result of increased intake is disputed in medical science throughout the world.

4. Less than 1 per cent of the fluoride contained in drinking water would act as a prophylactic. More than 99 per cent would be discharged with waste water directly into the environment. This additional fluoride emission into waters is unacceptable for ecological reasons.
5. The consumer cannot avoid fluoridated drinking water made available by public water supply. This mandatory intake of fluoride violates the basic right to bodily freedom from injury and free development of personality provided by the Basic Law of the Federal Republic of Germany.
6. Fluoride intake for the prevention of caries is more effective with specific measures taken by the individual than by fluoridation of drinking water.
7. An assessment of risks vs. benefits involving both the health aspects and ecological consequences justifies DVGW's rejection of the fluoridation of drinking water.