

# Speaking up for healthy communities

How to promote fluoride using the 4 C's of effective communication



# Facts alone aren't enough

1. Facts are often shared using **language** that many people cannot understand.
2. Facts **need context** to make them more relevant.
3. People tend to **filter the facts** to align with their existing beliefs or values.



# Rethinking our approach

- It's not just about **WHAT** we should communicate
- It's also about **HOW** we communicate



The 4 C's of effective  
communication

**Communicate  
with clarity**

# 1. Communicate with clarity

Write and talk  
to the public  
using plain  
language

*tests*  
If your ~~initial screening evaluation~~ <sup>show</sup> indicates you have  
*high blood pressure* ~~hypertension~~, you ~~will be asked~~ <sup>ask you</sup> to ~~participate~~ <sup>be in</sup> in the second  
*part* ~~phase~~ of this ~~research investigation~~ <sup>we study</sup>. ~~The investigation~~ <sup>Our goal is</sup>  
aims to ~~examine~~ <sup>test</sup> a new medication that may ~~prevent~~ <sup>help keep some people</sup>  
~~heart~~ <sup>cardiovascular</sup> disease. <sup>from getting</sup>

# 1. Communicate with clarity

JOURNAL OF PREVENTION & INTERVENTION IN THE COMMUNITY  
2019, VOL. 47, NO. 1, 5–13  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10852352.2018.1547304>



**“... the average grade level for articles with a pro-fluoride focus was more difficult to read.**

... Tests to assess the ease with which a text can be read also indicated that the anti-fluoride materials were more readable.”

#### ABSTRACT

Community water fluoridation has been deemed one of the greatest public health achievements, yet it remains a controversial topic. As those who are concerned about the benefits and safety of community water fluoridation are likely to turn to the Internet to find information, it is important to know the ease with which a person can read popular materials online. The aim of this study was to assess the readability levels of pro- and anti-fluoride articles on the Internet. Using a highly-recommended readability site, the first 100 articles garnered from websites in a Google were analyzed for a multitude of scores on popular readability tests. Of the 100 articles analyzed, 71 were deemed to be pro-fluoride, and 29 were anti-fluoride. Anti-fluoride materials were more readable across all scores when compared to the pro-fluoride materials. It is critical for consumers to be aware of the credibility of the health information they are reading and to be educated on how to determine if a website or source is reliable, especially when information is conflicting. It is also critical that health associa-

#### KEYWORDS

Dental health; fluoride; information; readability



(Source: Bascha CH, et al. “An assessment of the readability of online material related to fluoride,” *Journal of Prevention & Intervention in the Community*, 2019, 74:1.)

# 1. Communicate with clarity

- Speak in shorter sentences

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- Speak in **shorter sentences**
- Discard “**lazy words**” — words that take up space but aren’t necessary for understanding

~~In the future,~~ we want to ensure that every family that ~~happens to~~ live in a low-income community in Anytown ~~is truly able to~~ have access to both foods and beverages that are healthy ~~and nutritious.~~



# 1. Communicate with clarity

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We want to ensure that every low-income family in Anytown has access to healthy foods and drinks.

# 1. Communicate with clarity

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- Avoid **clinical or scientific terms** that many won’t understand

The fluoride ions that exist within fluoridated water interact with the enamel’s crystalline tooth structure that is called hydroxyapatite. The fluoride replaces the hydroxyapatite with fluorapatite, which helps it remineralize and resist tooth decay.

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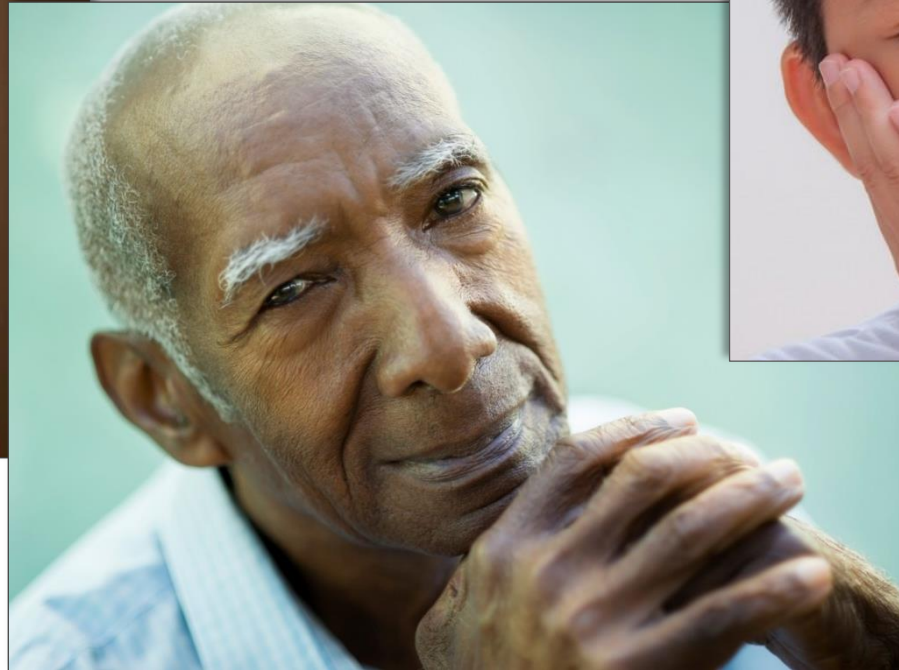
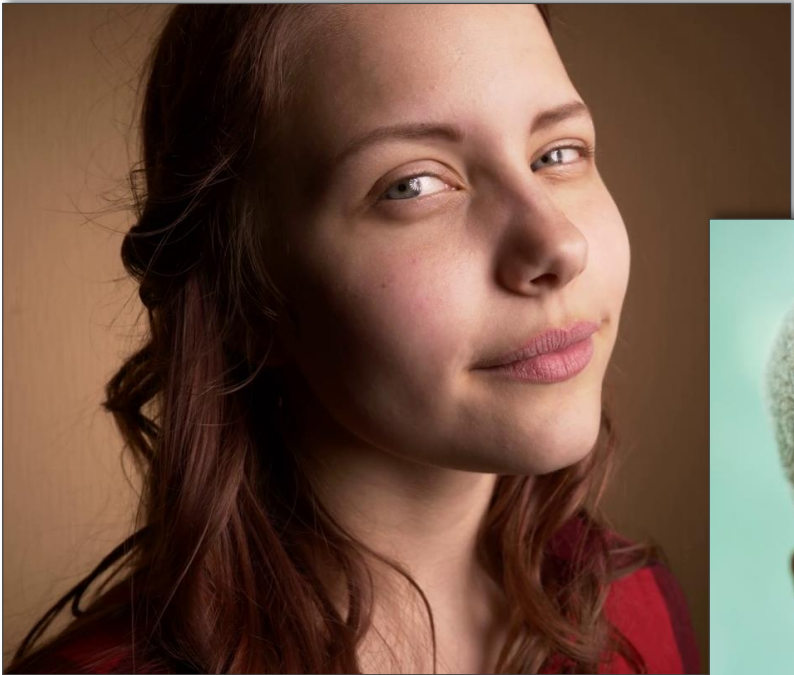
The fluoride in tap water strengthens the tooth enamel by making it more resistant to acids within the mouth that can cause a cavity.

The 4 C's of effective  
communication

**Communicate  
with context**

## 2. Communicate with context

Tell them what is at stake for their community



## 2. Communicate with context



- Tooth decay is the **most common chronic disease** of children
- Kids with poor dental health are 3 times more likely to **miss school days**
- Adults with unhealthy or missing teeth are at a disadvantage when seeking **jobs**

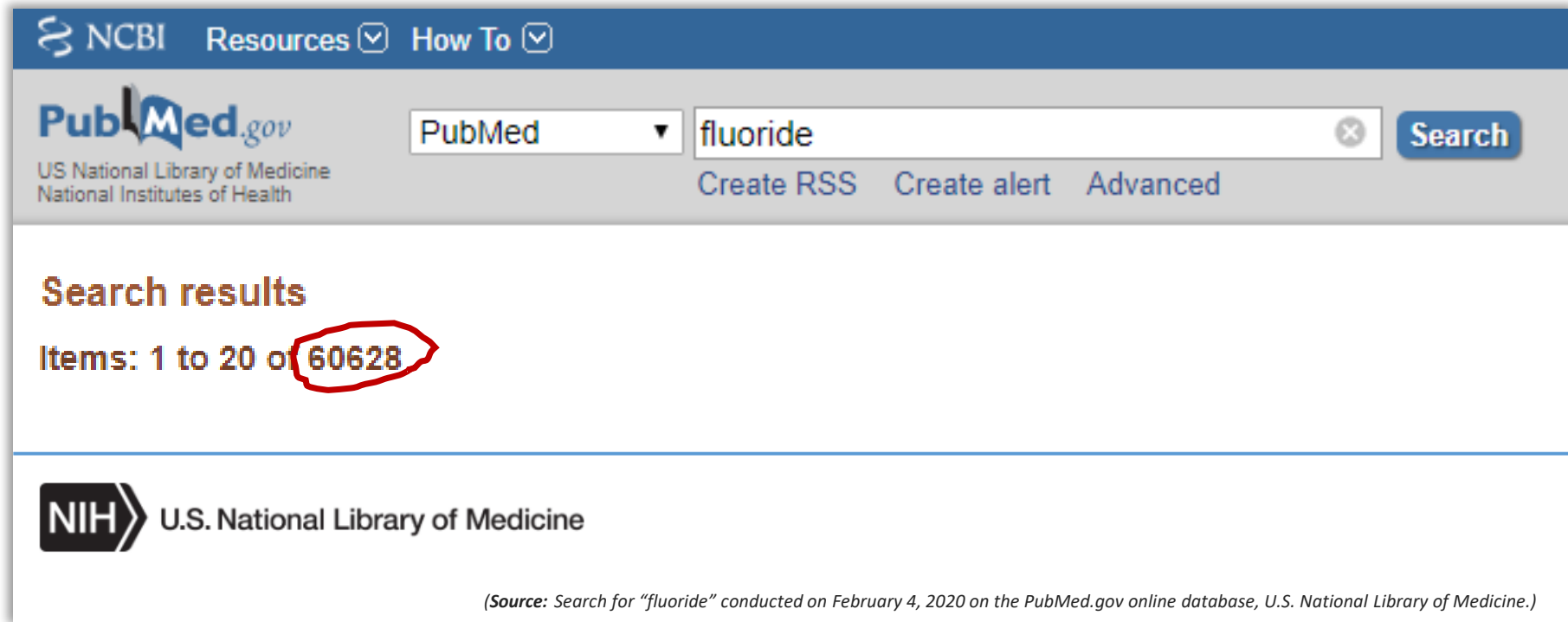
## 2. Communicate with context

Fluoride is a mineral that exists naturally in lakes, rivers, groundwater and the oceans.



## 2. Communicate with context

- **No single study** should drive our decisions about fluoridation.
- Why? Because fluoride has been the subject of **60,000+** research papers.



The screenshot shows the PubMed.gov search interface. At the top, there are navigation links for 'NCBI Resources' and 'How To'. The main search area includes the 'PubMed.gov' logo, the text 'US National Library of Medicine National Institutes of Health', a search box containing 'fluoride', and a 'Search' button. Below the search box are links for 'Create RSS', 'Create alert', and 'Advanced'. The search results section is titled 'Search results' and displays 'Items: 1 to 20 of 60628', with the number '60628' circled in red. At the bottom of the page, there is a logo for the 'NIH U.S. National Library of Medicine' and a footer note: '(Source: Search for "fluoride" conducted on February 4, 2020 on the PubMed.gov online database, U.S. National Library of Medicine.)'



## 2. Communicate with context



JENNIFER MEYER: By taking the fluoride out of the water supply, the tradeoff for that is children are going to experience one additional caries procedure per year at a ballpark of \$300 more per child.

RACHEL MARTIN, HOST:

A little more than a decade ago, the city of Juneau, Alaska, became one of many American cities that stopped adding fluoride to its tap water. At the time, science predicted more cavities. That prediction has now proven true. From member station KTOO, Jeremy Hsieh reports.

JEREMY HSIEH, BYLINE: Jennifer Meyer is a public health researcher with a new study in the journal BMC Oral Health. She talks about tooth decay and cavities the way dentists do. She calls them caries. And after studying what happened in Juneau to children under 6, this is her takeaway.

*(Source: National Public Radio story by Jeremy Hsieh, posted on January 1, 2019 at 4:58 AM ET; story referred to the following study: J. Meyer et al, "Consequences of community water fluoridation cessation for Medicaid-eligible children and adolescents in Juneau, Alaska." BMC Oral Health, 2018, 18:215.)*

# Analogies help provide context

An analogy can improve the public's understanding because:

- ✓ It relates to something they already know or do
- ✓ It can create a “mental picture”



*“Analogies allow patients to hang difficult concepts onto information they already know rather than having to learn from scratch.”*

– Terry S. Ruhl, MD

# Analogy: “What about my personal freedom?”

- Many states have laws restricting a person’s freedom to use their cell phone while driving a motor vehicle.
- Personal freedom is important — and so is the public’s health and safety. Sometimes, health and safety should take priority.



# Analogy: “Do we need both kinds of fluoride?”

- Air bags help to protect passengers in a car. But we still need to wear seatbelts.
- When it comes to protecting teeth, toothpaste and fluoridated water also work in different ways to prevent cavities. **We need both.**



# Analogy: “What about the warning on toothpaste?”

A lot of healthy products have similar warning labels.



**SUGGESTED USE:** Adults, for iron deficiency, take one tablet daily. For easier swallowing, take with water before and during ingestion. Taking with a meal may minimize the possibility of stomach upset. Keep bottle tightly closed. Store in a cool, dry place.

## Supplement Facts

Serving Size 1 Tablet

Amount Per Tablet	% Daily Value
Calcium (as Dibasic Calcium Phosphate) 18 mg	2%
Iron (as Ferrous Sulfate ) 65 mg	361%

Do not use if imprinted seal under cap is broken or missing.

**CAUTION:** Iron supplements may interact with certain medications. If you are taking prescription medications, or are pregnant or nursing, consult your healthcare provider before taking this product.

**WARNING:** Accidental overdose of iron-containing products is a leading cause of fatal poisoning in children under 6. Keep this product out of reach of children. In case of accidental overdose, call a doctor or poison control center immediately.

**OTHER INGREDIENTS:** Cellulose Gel, Croscarmellose Sodium, Hypromellose, Color Added, Magnesium Stearate, Polyethylene Glycol, Triethyl Citrate, Polysorbate 80.

Distributed by: **Nature Made Nutritional Products,**  
Mission Hills, CA 91346-9606, U.S.A.

1-800-276-2878 • [www.NatureMade.com](http://www.NatureMade.com)

\*Each tablet contains 65 mg elemental iron equivalent to 325 mg ferrous sulfate heptahydrate.

# A Supreme Court justice's analogy

“Throwing out [this federal process] when it has worked and is continuing to stop discriminatory changes is **like throwing away an umbrella in a rainstorm because you're not getting wet.**”

– *Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg*



The 4 C's of effective  
communication

# Communicate with care

### 3. Communicate with care





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“I’m a parent too so I can understand why reading that on your Facebook page made you feel concerned.

“Let me share what I know about that study and why I feel confident that fluoride is a safe way to protect teeth.”

# 3. Communicate with care

Don't repeat the fear-priming terms that critics use

TULSA WORLD

## Letter to the Editor: fluoridation revolutionized dentistry

Regarding the letters about fluoride, I have proof it is good for dentistry and Oklahomans ("No studies link water fluoridation to better tooth decay rates," Feb. 22 and "End adding fluoride to the city's water supply," Feb. 14).

I am not in favor of chemicals of any kind, but I drank my city's water for more than 65 years, and it has had no negative effect on me or anyone I know.

In 1950, dentists in my city examined all preschool children for cavities and found rampant decay among many baby teeth too extensive to repair. Those early bloomers with permanent molars had decay almost beyond repair.

Two or three years later, our city put fluoride in the drinking water, and the teeth of these preschool children improved. There was less decay by 50

*(Source: Dr. William J. Hardin, "Water fluoridation revolutionized dentistry with decay improvements," letter to the editor, Tulsa World, March 2019.)*

# 3. Communicate with care

Don't repeat the fear-priming terms that critics use

## The New Zealand Herald

### Letters: Studies support fluoride benefits

Fluoridation has benefits

A recent writer to your paper referred to fluoridation as being toxic.

The most recent NZ study of oral health shows that adolescents with fluoridation have 40 per cent less decay than those living without.

The significant benefits of water fluoridation are supported by 60 years of world studies. The benefits are over and above brushing teeth twice a day and eating a health diet.

The New Zealand studies are supported in Australia, USA, UK and Canada.

DARRELL GRACE  
Whanganui

The 4 C's of effective  
communication

# Communicate with collaboration



# The 4 C's of effective communication

- 1 Communicate with **clarity**
- 2 Communicate with **context**
- 3 Communicate with **care**
- 4 Communicate with **collaboration**



# Some final thoughts to consider

# Speak the brain *and* the heart

## The brain loves data

Facts and statistics are helpful and crucial to show people what is at stake



## The heart loves people

Human beings — their stories, their challenges and their hopes for a better future



# A brief yet powerful story

## RUTLAND WINNER 2001 PULITZER PRIZE HERALD

February 18, 2016

### Facts on the side of fluoride

My name is Michael Dick. I am a lifelong Rutland city resident and a general dentist in my 41st year of practice here in Rutland.

When I started practice 41 years ago, the decayed, missing and filled teeth in the population at large were unmanageable. My reception room played loud music to muffle the sound of children crying as their teeth were drilled, filled, redrilled and refilled.

Some of you may remember those days. Today is very different. Thanks to dental sealants, but particularly water fluoridation, more than 90 percent of my younger patients, including my own three children, turn age 18 without a filling in their heads.

*(Source: Dr. Michael Dick, "Facts on the side of fluoride," a commentary published by the Rutland Herald (VT), Feb. 18, 2016)*

# Stories inspire people to get involved

Thanks for helping to educate our city about oral health and the need to invest more in prevention. We have a serious need here.

Part of my motivation is Billy Darrow. We were classmates from grades 1 to 6. Billy had terrible teeth. In grade 3, we had a substitute teacher who was easily angered — and it was Billy she picked on. I can still hear her hurtful words. I wish I could go back in time and just make her stop.

# Who uses stories to strengthen their impact?

Americans always take care of each other. That love and unity held together the first pilgrims, it forged communities on the Great Plains, it inspired Clara Barton to found the Red Cross, and it keeps our nation thriving today.

Here tonight from the Florida panhandle is Tina Belcher. Her selfless generosity over 3 decades has made her known to all as “Mrs. Angel.” Every time a hurricane strikes, Mrs. Angel turns her tiny kitchen into a disaster relief center. On a single day after Hurricane Michael, she gave 476 people a warm meal. Mrs. Angel, your boundless heart inspires us all. Thank you. Thank you. (Applause.) Thank you very much.



, America. Hello. The First Lady and I wish each and every independence Day on this truly historic Fourth of July!

er as one nation with this very special Salute to America.

We celebrate our history, our people, and the heroes who proudly defend our flag — the brave men and women of the United States Military. (Applause.)

We are pleased to have with us Vice President Mike Pence and his wonderful wife Karen. (Applause.) We are also joined by many hardworking members of Congress; Acting Secretary of Defense Mark Esper and many other members of my

# Who uses stories to strengthen their impact?

**ELIZABETH WARREN**  
**FOR PRESIDENT**

## Prepared Remarks at Clark Atlanta University

I want to tell a story.

The year was 1881. After the tyranny of slavery, thousands of African Americans came to Atlanta hoping to build new lives, lives full of promise. The promise that they could fall in love and build homes and families. The promise that they could earn a wage that would support those families. The promise that they could plan for the future – for their own future and for the futures of their children and their grandchildren.

coming. It feels so good to be here with all of you on the  
of Clark Atlanta University. Can we hear it for America's

around after last night's debate because this city has been at  
America's fight for justice. Atlanta is a city that honors fighters.

Fighters like Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Coretta Scott King, Fannie Lou Hamer,  
Bayard Rustin and Septima Clark.

I've learned that no matter what fight you're in today, no matter how steep the  
climb feels, there are fighters who were here before you. Fighters we can learn  
from.

# How to present yourself

“I’m here tonight to talk to you about fluoride and why adding it to water is a no-brainer.”



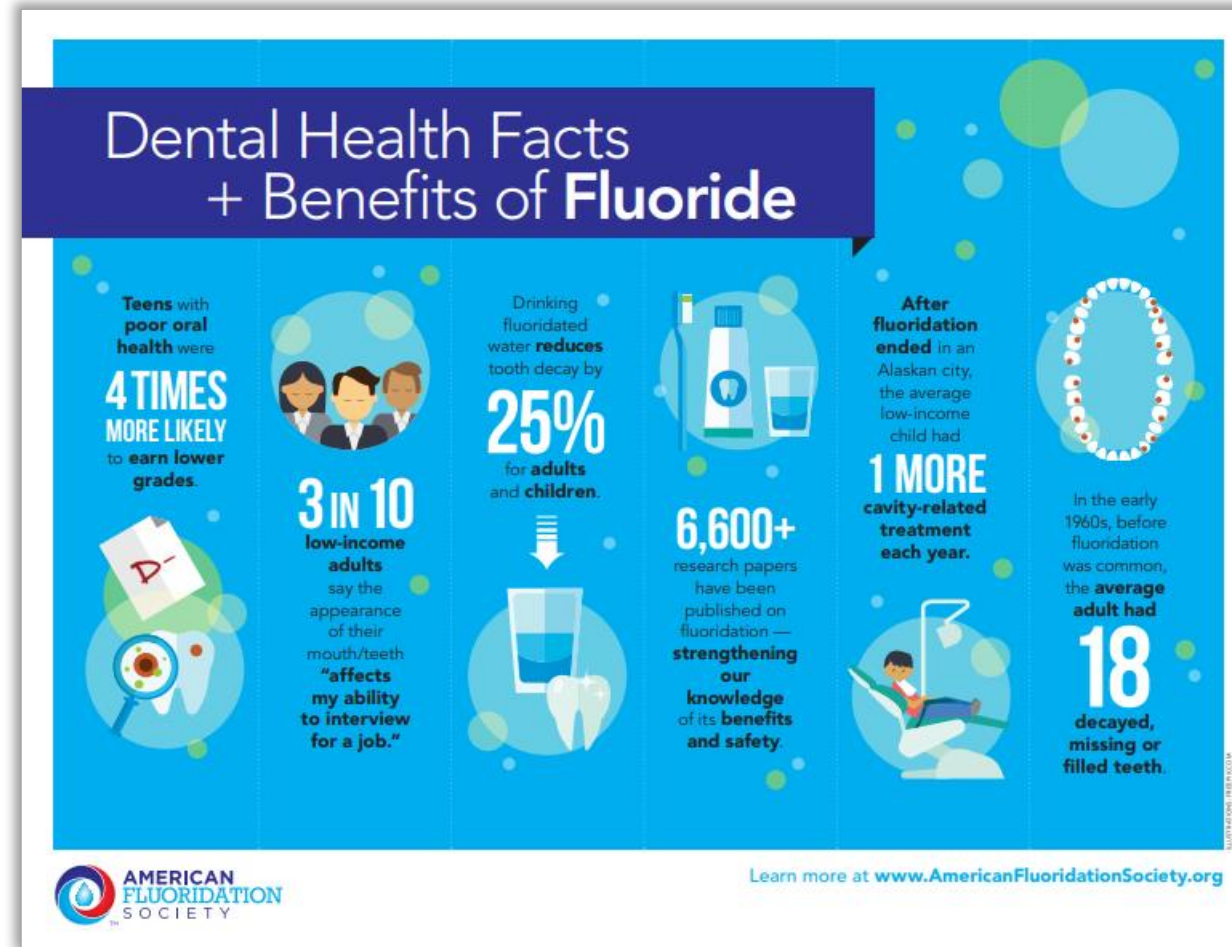
# How to present yourself

“I’m pleased to be here tonight. I will share some information and answer your questions so you have the facts you need to make an informed decision.”



# Find helpful information and resources

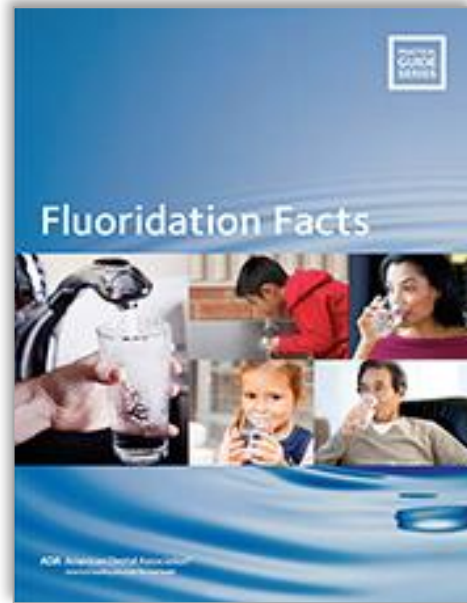
Visit the [AmericanFluoridationSociety.org](http://AmericanFluoridationSociety.org) for a variety of fact sheets, this infographic and other resources.



# Find helpful information and resources

Visit the ADA's website to access **Fluoridation Facts**. It's an excellent resource that thoroughly examines the many questions or claims that have been raised by critics about CWF:

[https://www.ada.org/~media/ADA/Files/Fluoridation\\_Facts.pdf](https://www.ada.org/~media/ADA/Files/Fluoridation_Facts.pdf)





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# Questions? Comments?

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