

May 23, 2016

Carol Gomez Summerhays, D.D.S.
President, American Dental Association
211 E Chicago Ave.
Chicago, IL 60611

Attn:

Ms. Madeline Drexler
Editor, Harvard Public Health
90 Smith St.
Boston, MA 02120

Letter to the Editor re: Is fluoridated water safe?

Dear Ms. Drexler,

On behalf of the American Dental Association and its 159,000 member dentists, I am writing to express sincere concern over the article entitled, "Is fluoridated water safe," by Nicole Davis that appears in *Harvard Public Health*, Spring 2016. The article overlooks critical facts about community water fluoridation that must be shared with your esteemed readers and the public at large.

To say "evidence is mounting," that risks outweigh the benefits is extremely misleading. More than 70 years of the best available scientific evidence shows community water fluoridation is safe, effective and economical in preventing tooth decay.

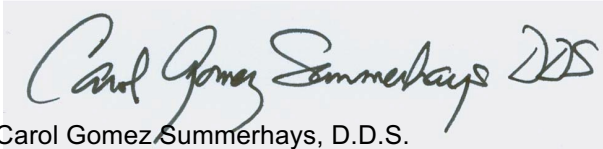
The "damning analysis," Davis claims was presented in The Cochrane Report is also a biased misinterpretation. The Cochrane report authors freely admit there is much debate around the approach used to assess the quality of evidence within the review. The report's findings were shaped by its unusually narrow inclusion criteria, excluding 97 percent of the more than 4,000 relevant studies that it identified, including many published in reputable, peer-reviewed journals. The authors of the Cochrane review acknowledged significant limitations for the quality of evidence within their review when applied to public health interventions, particularly for research questions where evidence from randomized controlled trials will never be available. Nevertheless, they did conclude that there were fewer teeth affected by cavities and a higher percentage of caries-free children in fluoridated communities, findings that are similar to other evidence-based reviews.

It's also a shame the author failed to highlight Harvard's documented, [long-standing support](#) for community water fluoridation, based on a letter shared with the American Dental Association in 2013 from the Deans of the Harvard School of Public Health, Harvard School of Dental Medicine and Harvard Medical School.

Moreover, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services reported in 2015 their continuing support of the safety and effectiveness of community water fluoridation, what the CDC has described as one of ten great public health achievements of the 20th century.

For years, community water fluoridation has provided a safe and effective way to fight tooth decay and improve oral health across populations. We must educate the public – and one another – with the facts.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink on a light gray rectangular background. The signature reads "Carol Gomez Summerhays D.D.S." in a cursive script.

Carol Gomez Summerhays, D.D.S.
President, American Dental Association