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Milwaukee Water Works to Temporarily Reduce Fluoride Addition Due to National Supply Chain Constraints

MILWAUKEE – Due to national supply chain constraints affecting fluoride treatment additives, Milwaukee Water Works will temporarily reduce the amount of fluoride added to drinking water. The City of Milwaukee Health Department is working with Milwaukee Water Works to provide residents with public health information throughout this temporary adjustment.

The water remains safe to drink and continues to meet water quality standards. This temporary adjustment is related only to the availability of fluoride treatment additives and does not affect the overall safety or quality of Milwaukee's drinking water.

While fluoride is not required to make drinking water safe, community water fluoridation is a long-standing public health measure that helps prevent tooth decay and improve oral health. Milwaukee has fluoridated its drinking water since 1953, following decades of scientific evidence supporting community water fluoridation as a safe and effective way to help prevent tooth decay.

The previous supplier was unable to renew its contract because of ongoing national supply chain challenges affecting fluoride treatment additives. Milwaukee Water Works issued a request to secure a new supplier through the City's procurement process, with bids due on Monday, July 27 at 4:30 p.m. No bids were received.

Milwaukee Water Works currently adds fluoride to drinking water to maintain a fluoride level of approximately 0.6–0.7 milligrams per liter (mg/L), consistent with public health recommendations. Beginning Friday, July 31, fluoride levels will be reduced to approximately 0.3 mg/L. The reduction will extend available supplies until the procurement process resumes later this year. Normal fluoride addition will resume once a new vendor contract is in place.

“This temporary adjustment is driven by supply availability and does not affect the safety or quality of Milwaukee’s drinking water,” said Patrick Pauly, Milwaukee Water Works Superintendent.

“Milwaukee Water Works and the City of Milwaukee Health Department will continue working together to provide clear information to residents and restore normal fluoride addition as soon as possible.”

"Community water fluoridation is a safe, effective, and inexpensive public health measure that helps prevent tooth decay," said Mike Totoraitis, PhD, Commissioner of Health. "While fluoride levels will be temporarily lower than our usual target, Milwaukee's drinking water remains safe. We appreciate Milwaukee Water Works' efforts to responsibly manage the remaining supply while securing a new vendor, and we'll continue working together to restore recommended fluoride levels as soon as supplies become available."

Community water fluoridation has been used safely for decades and helps strengthen tooth enamel, reducing cavities in both children and adults. Fluoride is a naturally occurring mineral found in water at varying levels, and community water fluoridation adjusts fluoride to a level recommended for cavity prevention. Fluoride is also found in everyday sources such as toothpaste, mouth rinse, and some foods and beverages.

Residents do not need to take any action related to their drinking water. Because this reduction is temporary, most residents do not need to make changes to their drinking water or oral hygiene routines. Residents with specific questions about their oral health or fluoride needs should contact their dentist or health care provider.

For more information and updates, visit www.milwaukee.gov/fluoride

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