



Dear Conference Attendees:

Welcome to the 2013 National Oral Health Conference. I want to thank you for the leadership and efforts you are providing to the nation in the area of oral health.

As Surgeon General I have been working hard to encourage individuals and communities to make healthy choices because I believe it is better to prevent illness and disease rather than treat it after it occurs. Community water fluoridation is one of the most effective choices communities can make to prevent health problems while actually improving the oral health of their citizens.

One of water fluoridation's biggest advantages is that it benefits all residents of a community—at home, work, school, or play—through the simple act of drinking fluoridated water. Where water fluoridation is a community-wide intervention, the benefits are not limited by a person's income level or their ability to receive routine dental care. It also is a very cost-effective intervention. A lifetime of cavity prevention can be obtained for less than the cost of one dental filling.

Fluoridation's effectiveness in preventing tooth decay is not limited to children, but extends throughout life, resulting in fewer and less severe cavities. In fact, each generation born since the implementation of water fluoridation has enjoyed better dental health than the generation that preceded it.

As then-Surgeon General David Satcher noted in *Oral Health in America: A Report of the Surgeon General* (May 2000), community water fluoridation continues to be the most cost-effective and practical way to provide protection from tooth decay in a community. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has recognized fluoridation as one of 10 great public health achievements of the 20th Century.

This year marks the 68th anniversary of community water fluoridation.

I join with previous Surgeons General in acknowledging community water fluoridation as an effective public health strategy, and recommend its continued use and expansion to enhance the oral health of all Americans.

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