



American Dental Association
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Water Fluoridation and Alleged Risk of Rare Bone Cancer

The *Wall Street Journal* (July 22, Section B-Market Place, page 1) and other news outlets are reporting that a Harvard University doctor was charged with misrepresenting the findings of a doctoral student's thesis that reportedly found that fluoridated water increases the risk of osteosarcoma (a rare bone cancer). Harvard University is conducting an investigation into the matter. Your local media may report on this story, and your patients may ask you about it. We will post a brief media statement about this issue on ADA.org.

To help you respond to patient inquiries, the ADA provides the following points:

- Recent news reports may be alarming people unnecessarily about the safety of water fluoridation
- We're talking about one doctoral student's paper, a paper that has not been published in a scientific journal and therefore has not been available for peer review. Peer review is a process where a group of experts review studies prior to publication to determine if the study is designed well and if the conclusions are valid.
- The student notes in her thesis that there are several limitations to her study and recommends that the findings be confirmed using data from other studies. (For example, she notes that the study may not accurately reflect the actual amount of fluoride consumed by study subjects.)
- The vast majority of studies by nationally recognized researchers in widely-published, respected and peer-reviewed scientific journals conclude that water fluoridation has not shown any ill effects on health. Studies show that water fluoridation can prevent between 15-40 percent of tooth decay, and that there is no association between cancer rates in humans and optimal levels of fluoride in drinking water.
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has proclaimed community water fluoridation one of the 10 greatest public health achievements of the 20th century. According to our current Surgeon General, fluoridation is the single most effective public health measure to prevent tooth decay and to improve oral health for a lifetime, for both children and adults.
- Unless and until the weight of scientific evidence shifts to the contrary, the American Dental Association continues to recommend that community water supplies be fluoridated to reduce the risk of tooth decay.
- As a dentist, my goal is to help protect and improve your oral health. I believe that water fluoridation is important in preventing tooth decay.
- As a member of the American Dental Association, I will be kept up to date on the latest dental research, so if the science on this issue changes, I will certainly let you know immediately.
- As the leader of a science-based profession, the ADA is open to new scientific information and welcomes the opportunity to address it according to the standards that prevail in the scientific community.

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