



### Oral Health Facts

- 1 in 3 Oregon children need treatment for tooth decay.
- School-aged children in Oregon have worse oral health than children in Washington, California, Idaho and Alaska.
- Tooth decay is the most common childhood disease.
- 56% of children in Multnomah County have had tooth decay in primary or permanent teeth.
- Low-income families and people of color are more likely to experience tooth decay.



### Oral Health Services Offered by Multnomah County Health Department

- Operates 5 safety net dental clinics, including prevention services (including infants and toddlers ages 9-36 months), urgent care and basic routine services.
- Grade-level appropriate oral health education presentations in schools, pre-school- grade 6.
- Places dental sealants (protective coating) in over 60 schools to grades 2, 3 and 7,8.
- Provides the fluoride tablet program to schools (requires parental permissions to participate).
- Supports and develops policies that promote good oral health for all members of our community, including nutrition, promoting tobacco-free workplaces and helping people quit tobacco, assisting residents to sign up for Oregon Health Plan (including dental insurance) and community water fluoridation.

### Fluoride Information

- Multnomah County Health Department supports fluoride as an evidence-based practice for preventing tooth decay.
- Almost all water contains some naturally occurring fluoride, but often at levels too low to prevent tooth decay.
- When communities adjust the fluoride concentration to levels beneficial to reduce tooth decay and promote oral health, it is called community water fluoridation.
- Currently, no water systems add fluoride to the water in Multnomah County.
- Fluoride tablet programs are used in this and other communities where the water is not fluoridated. However their effectiveness is limited:
  - Challenges with access, consent and compliance make this a less effective method to provide fluoride to a population.
  - The program does not reach all members of the community who would benefit from fluoride.
- Water fluoridation reaches all members of a community and helps prevent tooth decay in children, adults and the elderly.
- Community water fluoridation is effective:
  - Decreases tooth decay by as much as 25%
  - Improvements are seen even with widespread availability of fluoride from other sources such as toothpastes and food or beverages manufactured in fluoridated communities.
- Community water fluoridation is safe:
  - The only adverse side effect is dental fluorosis, a discoloring or pitting of teeth from excess fluoride exposure. Fluorosis is not dangerous or harmful.
  - About 23% of children have some fluorosis. The great majority have fluorosis that is so mild that it takes a trained expert to detect it. About 1% of children have fluorosis that adversely affects the appearance of the teeth.
  - None of the other health concerns related to fluoride have been verified by rigorous scientific scrutiny despite generations of people consuming fluoridated water.

### For More Information

[www.cdc.gov/fluoridation](http://www.cdc.gov/fluoridation)