

## Fluoridated water protects baby teeth, too

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(HealthDay)—Fluoride in drinking water reduces the odds for severe cavities in baby teeth, researchers from New Zealand report.

Although fluoridated toothpaste is widely available, fluoridated [water](#) continues to show a benefit in reducing cavities, said Dr. Howard Pollick, a [health sciences](#) clinical professor at the University of California, San Francisco School of Dentistry.

"Community water fluoridation is the most effective tool to reduce disparities in [oral health](#) and is especially important at a time during the COVID-19 pandemic when access to preventive dental services is reduced," Pollick said in a news release from the American Dental Association. He was not involved in the study.

For the report, researchers led by Philip Schluter from the University of Canterbury School of Health Sciences in Christchurch collected data on nearly 276,000 children in New Zealand with a median age of 4—half older than 4, half younger. Some kids lived in areas where fluoride was added to the water, and others lived in areas without fluoridated water.

They found that kids drinking fluoridated water were less likely to develop severe cavities than the other children.

The children were part of New Zealand's B4 School Check screening program between July 2010 and June 2016.

"Premature loss of '[baby teeth](#)' can cause serious malalignment of the permanent teeth," said Dr. Leon Stanislav, chair of the American Dental Association's national fluoridation advisory committee.

"This is aside from pain and suffering of tooth decay, abscessed baby teeth, and the cost of dental care treating such preventable conditions. Also, the unnecessary trauma of treating childhood decay comes into play," Stanislav said.

ADA advisory committee members pointed out that baby teeth are

essential for an adequate nutrition process (chewing, biting) and proper speech development. They are also key to maintaining space and guiding the eruption of the permanent [teeth](#).

The study was published online recently in the journal *JAMA Pediatrics*.

**More information:** For more on fluoride, visit the [American Dental Association](#).

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