

Treatments, toothpaste provide fluoride

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ligrams per litre of water.

A portion of Stouffville's water should be coming from Lake Ontario in 2008, meaning fluoride concentrations should rise.

But in the meantime, "all the smaller communities rely on the natural concentration of fluoride," Mr. Bannon said.

Groundwater supplies in smaller communities generally aren't fluoridated. The municipalities that do have fluoride have their water piped in from Toronto, which fluoridates its water.

A lot of people don't want extra things added to their water and fluoride is "pretty nasty" to deal with from an operator's perspective, Debbie Korolnek, general manager of water and waste water for York Region, said.

Fluoridation "is not a black and white issue," she said.

Acceptable concentrations of fluoride were lowered in 2000, due to health concerns.

Her advice for people living in areas with unfluoridated water is to talk to their dentist to see what's best for them.

Dr. Bob Boadway, who has practised dentistry in Stouffville for 24 years, said studies show areas with

fluoridated water have a lower dental cavity rate than areas without it.

On the whole, he sees significantly fewer children with dental cavities compared to the first few years of his practice, mainly due to the fact people are more aware of how to care for their teeth. They use fluoridated toothpaste and have fluoride treatments in the dentist's office.

That's why "you don't really have to have it (fluoridation)," he said.

Since there's very little fluoride in town water, youngsters from three years of age and up can safely use fluoridated toothpaste, he said, but they should be encouraged not to swallow it.

Regular fluoride treatments in the dentist's office, which take about a minute, will also help to reduce cavities.

While the Ontario Dental Association advises that children under six not use fluoridated toothpaste, that warning is directed to residents living in Toronto and other areas with fluoridated water, Dr. Boadway said.

In-office fluoride treatments in rural communities can help lessen plaque buildup that can start the process towards cavities and lessen sensitivity of teeth. They're also useful for older people whose gums have

receded and are more prone to having cavities in the exposed roots of their teeth.

One hazard of too much fluoride, particularly for very young children, is fluorosis, where white areas or brown stains can appear on teeth. The risk of this disappears once the teeth are formed.

There are other health hazards including impacts on the skeletal system with severe overdosage of fluoride.

The Ontario Dental Association supports fluoride and community water fluoridation, according to its website.

In 1945, the City of Brantford was the first municipality in Canada to have fluoride added to its water supply.

Communities with fluoridated water have a significantly lower rate of dental carries and "every dollar spent on fluoridated water saves \$80 in restorative costs," Ken Swartz, spokesperson for the Ontario Dental Association, said.

He added that about 75 per cent of the population of Ontario has access to community fluoridation.



STAFF PHOTO/HANNELORE VOLPE

Dr. Bob Boadway and dental assistant Sandra Lidster prepare for a fluoride treatment at Park Drive Dental Centre in Stouffville.

More information about fluoridation is available by logging on to york.ca/Services/Water/or/oda.on.ca



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