Revised optimal fluoride level in drinking water released

After four years of planning, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) has finalized their recommendation that community water fluoridation should be adjusted to 0.7ppm. This has been the draft plan since 2011. Previously the recommendation was a range of 0.7 – 1.2 ppm, depending on the local climate.

Dr. Karen Milman, Sonoma County Health Officer applauds the DHHS announcement. “Our local assessment of potential community water fluoridation for Sonoma County has been based on the assumption that the level would be adjusted to 0.7 ppm. We have set our sights on that optimal level for decay prevention and our dental health efforts are in alignment with the final national recommendations.”

The recommendation was updated to take into account the fact that children and adults drink about the same amount of water on a daily basis no matter where in the United States they live. Selecting a single target level will reflect this consistency. In addition, given the increased availability of fluoride through other sources, the lower number was selected to both protect dental health and minimize the chance of enamel fluorosis.

U.S. Deputy Surgeon General Rear Admiral Boris D. Lushniak, MD, MPH, urges continued activities to prevent dental disease. "While additional sources of fluoride are more widely used than they were in 1962, the need for community water fluoridation still continues," Lushniak said. "Community water fluoridation continues to reduce tooth decay in children and adults beyond that provided by using only toothpaste and other fluoride-containing products."

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has listed fluoridation of drinking water as one of the top 10 greatest public health achievements between 1990 and 1999 due to the dramatic decline in tooth decay across the country. According to the CDC, drinking water with the optimal level of fluoride keeps the tooth strong and solid and reduces decay by approximately 25 percent in children and adults. Community water fluoridation has been recommended by nearly all public health, medical and dental organizations including the American Dental Association, American Academy of Pediatrics, U.S. Public Health Service and World Health Organization. Local organizations such as the Sonoma County Medical Association, Redwood Empire Dental Society and Community Action Partnership have endorsed fluoridated drinking water.

For more information on the county’s dental health activities visit the Sonoma County Department of Health Services websites:

http://www.sonoma-county.org/health/topics/dentalhealth.asp;

http://www.sonoma-county.org/health/topics/fluoridation.asp.