

Torrington ponders water fluoridation

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TORRINGTON -- This city's residents may soon have the opportunity to vote on whether they want fluoride in the city's water.

There are those in town who question fluoride's benefits.

In August, Dr. Timothy Pieper explained the benefits of fluoridated water to the Torrington City Council.

At a City Council meeting earlier this month, chemist Mark Court with the Wyoming Rural Water Association told the council that he "refers to fluoride as an unnecessary toxic additive that some people feel should be added to drinking water to reduce tooth decay."

"There is no solid evidence whatsoever that fluoridation reduces tooth decay," he told the council. "Instead, science suggests that tooth decay is a result of improper dental hygiene as well as an over-abundance of refined white sugar and white flour that we consume," he added. "The American Dental Association has stated that ingesting fluoride has no bearing on preventing tooth decay. In fact, the ADA has advised that parents do not give fluoridated water to infants because it may cause brain damage."

In August, Pieper told council members that research has shown that cities that fluoridate their water supply have a greater frequency of preventing tooth decay.

"It is one of the single most safe and cost effective public health projects ever done," Pieper said. "For each dollar spent on fluoridation, \$50 is saved in dental care. The cost to continue a fluoride system after it is installed is about 50 cents per person, per year."

He estimated fluoridating Torrington's water supply would cost the city \$3,000 annually.

"It's especially effective for the lower socioeconomic population who can't afford fluoride supplements for their children or get regular dental care like some people would," Pieper told the council in August.

Pieper noted that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in 1999 proclaimed fluoride one of the 10 great public health achievements of the 20th century. He said the CDC noted that more than 170 million people are under public fluoride adjustments in their water. And studies show a decrease of 50-65 percent in dental decay can be expected if it is used.

Torrington in 2007 finished its new water treatment plant with reverse osmosis units, costing the town \$2.4 million.

The cost of fluoridating the water system would cost users approximately 75 cents to one dollar for the average customer and, according to Torrington water supervisor Tom Troxel, does not include the initial cost for the equipment to initiate the fluoride treatment.

Jim Van Dorn added that less than a half dozen Wyoming cities fluoridate their water. Cheyenne does, he said, primarily because it serves F.E. Warren Air Force Base and are required to.

"Ingesting this is not good for you if you want to rinse it in your mouth that's OK, but don't ingest it," Van Dorn said. "... It will be a maintenance nightmare, you will have to sample more and make sure the fluoride levels are down. I think it might be something you need to search deep and figure out whether you need it or not. The levels (of fluoride) you have coming out of your system now (in the water) is acceptable and I don't see where you need to add anymore."

Torrington resident and fluoridation critic Paul Puebla gave printed facts to the mayor and council about fluoridating the city's water. He also gave them a printed list of 1,400 dental professionals who have

signed a petition "calling for an end to water fluoridation," which was updated as of February 2008.

Puebla wants the issue to come before voters in the primary election, and suggests letting the voters tell the council and mayor what their preference is, after having to pay for a new water treatment plant.