



FLUORIDE FACT SHEET

Q: What is Fluoride?

A: It is a naturally occurring mineral and fluoride compounds are salts that form when the element fluorine combines with minerals in soil or rocks. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) notes that most water supplies contain some naturally occurring fluoride.

Q: Is there Fluoride in the Las Cruces water?

A: Las Cruces Utilities does not add fluoride to the water system. The naturally occurring fluoride in our water measures very close to the optimal levels identified in the 2011 guidelines from the US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

In Las Cruces, naturally occurring fluoride concentrations detected in city supply wells range from 0.26 to 0.8 ppm (parts per million) with an approximate 0.5 ppm system average.

The New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) states “Fluoride is a naturally occurring mineral that is found in most water sources. It is considered a beneficial nutrient and is present in trace amounts in the body. At low concentrations in drinking water, it helps strengthen teeth and bones. At concentrations above 2.0 ppm, negative impacts can result.” The EPA states that these impacts could be cosmetic (such as skin or tooth discoloration) or aesthetic effects (such as taste, odor, or color) in drinking water.

Based solely on possible health risks and exposure over a lifetime with an adequate margin of safety, the EPA has developed **maximum contaminant level goals (MCLG)**. Contaminants are defined as any physical, chemical, biological, or radiological substances or matter in water. The EPA MCLG for fluoride in water is 4.0 ppm. The EPA has set this level of protection based on the best available science to prevent potential health problems. This standard is set to protect against risks from excessive exposure to fluoride over the span of a lifetime.

Two questions commonly posed to the Las Cruces Utilities Water Resources Section and our responses are:

Q: Why don't we ADD fluoride to our water to help prevent tooth decay?

A: We agree with NMED that the minimal amount of naturally occurring fluoride in our water is a beneficial nutrient. The low detected amount of fluoride falls well below levels that could be considered any kind of risk, even over the course of a lifetime.

Q: Why don't we REMOVE the naturally occurring fluoride from our water?

A: Implementation of fluoride removal treatment would cost tens of millions of dollars in capital expenses alone, and would substantially increase Utilities' operation and maintenance costs due to increased labor, chemical, electrical, replacement, and concentrate disposal costs.*

Individuals who continue to be concerned about the fluoride levels in our local water are urged to consider the variety of 50-gallon per day Reverse Osmosis under-sink and whole house treatment systems, commonly available with costs ranging from \$250.00 to \$1,000.00 or more. Maintenance costs vary depending on water use, with typical maintenance involving periodic changing out of filters.

**The Daniel B. Stephens & Associates, Inc. June 2014 fluoride study results are available upon request. Please contact Las Cruces Utilities Customer Service at (575) 541-2111 for your copy of the 5-page report.*