

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND WELFARE

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NATIONAL CANCER INSTITUTE REJECTS
FLUORIDE SCARE REPORT

The National Cancer Institute today reaffirmed that its epidemiological studies show no relationship between the fluoridation of water and cancer.

The statement was prompted by a number of letters received by the Institute and generated by a one-page flyer issued in January by the National Health Federation, a California-based group. The flyer advertises a report prepared by the Federation and purporting to show that the cancer death rate is higher in cities with fluoridated water supplies.

The National Cancer Institute, whose figures are cited in the Federation report, in March noted errors, omissions, and statistical distortions in the Federation report and stated that "Results of this analysis fail to support any suspicion of hazard associated with fluoridation."

Another Federation report, citing the same Cancer Institute figures used in the earlier report, on March 25 purported again to show "a definite link between fluoridation and cancer death rate."

However, the Cancer Institute statement issued today says the Institute's epidemiological study cited in the Federation's statement "fails to show any relationship between the fluoridation of water and cancer. In fact, the results of the study rather suggest a protective influence from fluoridation."

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Enclosure
National Cancer Institute Statement



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND WELFARE
PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE
NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH
BETHESDA, MARYLAND 20014

NATIONAL CANCER INSTITUTE

Statement By The National Cancer Institute
On Fluoridation Studies By The National Health Federation

Two recent statements, dated January 6 and March 25, 1975, have been distributed by the National Health Federation naming certain major cities in the United States and implying that there is some relationship between the presence or absence of artificial fluoridation of water in these cities and their cancer death rates. According to these statements, the data are based on two Government publications: "Fluoridation Census, 1969" published by the National Institute of Dental Research; and "U.S. Cancer Mortality by County: 1950-1969," published by the National Cancer Institute.

The statements distributed by the National Health Federation contain factual errors and oversimplified data, and ignore other factors in the complex matter of cancer causation. Furthermore, by directly relating fluoridation with higher death rates from cancer, the authors are ignoring other factors that are known to have a relationship to cancer. For example, the fluoridated cities on the list are cities that have been industrialized for a much longer time than the nonfluoridated cities named. Environmental pollutants associated with industrialization are known to have carcinogenic (cancer-causing) effects that undoubtedly contribute to the high cancer mortality rates in those cities. Factors such as social class and ethnic origin are also known to affect the development of cancer, inasmuch as they influence such areas as diet, access to medical care, lifestyle, and genetic background.

To account for such factors, a more accurate picture might be obtained by including cities with a population of 500,000 or more (according to the 1960 census). For example, Boston, Cincinnati, and New Orleans, all non-fluoridated cities, are closer to the six fluoridated cities on the list in terms of socioeconomic factors and level of industrialization. An analysis of data in the NCI publication shows that these three cities had cancer mortality rates equal to or greater than the six cities quoted in the statement.

A better comparison might also be achieved by comparing each individual city before and after its water was fluoridated. There are eight cities in which such a comparison can be made for the 20-year period covered by the NCI survey. In seven of these, the average death rate from cancer during the nonfluoridated period was equal to or greater than that for the entire 20-year span.

In summary, the NCI epidemiological study cited in the National Health Federation's statement fails to show any relationship between the fluoridation of water and cancer. In fact, the results of the study rather suggest a protective influence from fluoridation.

For further information, contact the Office of Cancer Communications, National Cancer Institute, Bethesda, Maryland, 20014.

April 25, 1975