

Dental Public Health Activity Descriptive Summary

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Well Water Fluoride Testing Program

Early childhood caries (ECC) has been recognized and identified as a public health problem in Vermont since 1997. The Vermont Department of Health, Office of Oral Health administers the Fluoride in Well Water Program to focus on prevention and intervention of early childhood caries through the health care system, targeting children ages four years and younger. The program raises awareness and educates health care providers and parents about the importance of appropriate fluoride supplementation.

Primary health care providers and dentists make decisions daily as to the need for prescribing fluoride supplements for children. Vermont has a booklet called *Vermont's Guide to Fluoride Levels in Public Systems* (available at:

http://healthvermont.gov/family/dental/fluoride/documents/guide_to_fluoride_levels_in_public_water_systems.pdf) which offers guidance to practitioners in determining the existing level of fluoridation a family is receiving from their public water system, prior to supplementation. If families are on private wells or spring systems and the fluoride level is unknown, their water must be tested before receiving fluoride supplements. The Vermont Department of Health Laboratory (VDHL) offers a fluoride test to families with children 4 years and younger at no charge. The form is obtained through their primary healthcare provider or dentist. Both the family and the providers receive the final fluoride testing results. This program has detected geographic areas around Vermont with high natural fluoride levels, well above the optimum range for health. This confirms the importance of knowing the natural fluoride levels in the water prior to supplementation.

In 2014, 339 tests were completed (\$12.00 per kit) and 129 primary health care providers (dentists, family physicians, physician assistants, nurse practitioners) are participating in the recommended well water testing. Moreover, the number of participants is on the rise: as of early December 2015, 415 tests have been completed and 236 primary health care providers are participating.

Lessons Learned:

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