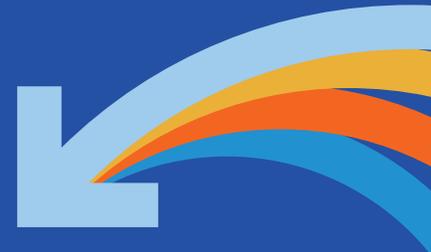


# Water Fluoridation

Protecting Oral Health and Saving Money for Kentuckians



## FLUORIDE IS SAFE, EFFECTIVE, AND SAVES MONEY

Fluoride is a naturally occurring mineral that strengthens tooth enamel and reverses early signs of decay. Added in safe, measured amounts to public water supplies, fluoride repairs weak spots before cavities form — helping families stay healthy and avoid costly care. Recognized by leading public health and dental organizations as one of the most successful and cost-effective public health initiatives in history, community water fluoridation protects oral health across Kentucky while keeping preventive care affordable and accessible.

## WHY FLUORIDE WORKS

### Filling in the Gaps

Kentucky has the second-highest rate of senior tooth loss in the U.S.: more than one in five adults age 65 and older have lost all of their natural teeth to decay or disease. The state also ranks 46th in annual dental visits — more than 40% of adults haven't seen a dentist in the past year<sup>1</sup>, and 27% of adults in Kentucky don't have dental insurance.<sup>2</sup>

### Making Care Affordable

With limited Medicaid dental coverage and high out-of-pocket costs, fluoride offers low-cost prevention that keeps people healthy and takes pressure off of emergency care.

### Small Investment, Big Savings

Fluoridation costs about \$1 per person per year and delivers a return of roughly \$20 for every dollar invested, saving families and states from paying more for poorer dental outcomes.<sup>3</sup>

### Don't Break A Running System

Nearly 95% of Kentuckians already have access to fluoridated water through existing community systems.<sup>4</sup> With ongoing shortages of dental providers across the state — especially in rural communities — rolling back fluoridation would remove a critical layer of protection and leave families paying for dental care they otherwise might not need.

## WHAT LAWMAKERS CAN DO

### Protect What Works

Protect existing community water fluoridation programs and oppose legislation that would roll them back.

### Keep Systems Strong

Support funding to maintain and modernize water system infrastructure and ensure reliable access to fluoridated water.

### Clear Up Confusion

Ensure communities have access to clear, accurate, and evidence-based information about fluoride's safety and value.

## THE COST OF REMOVING FLUORIDE

### A Costly Repeal

Removing water fluoridation could cost the state \$19.7 million per year in increased Medicaid expenses for every 10% of the population that loses access to fluoridated water.<sup>5</sup>

### A Logistical Challenge

Many Kentucky water systems serve multiple cities and counties. When fluoridation decisions are made city-by-city, it can increase operational challenges, create customer confusion, and disrupt consistent access to proven preventive care.

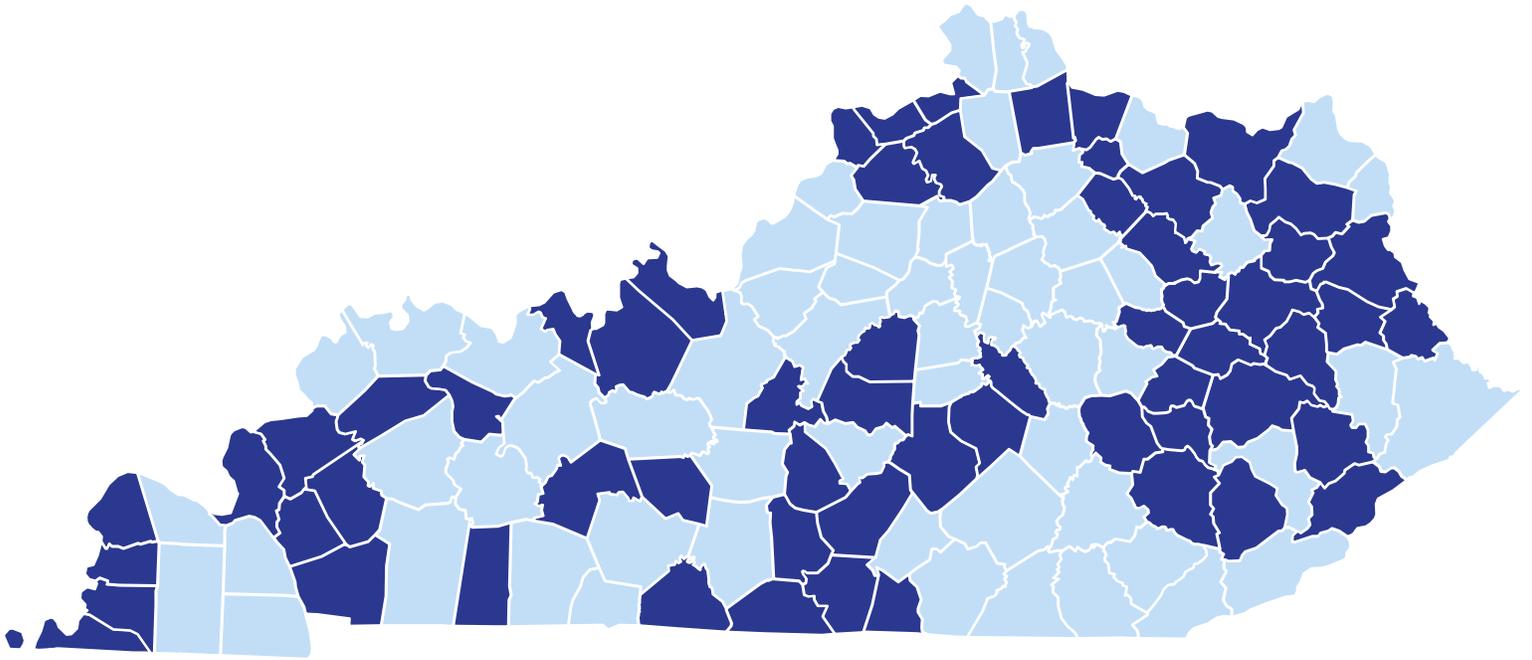
### Statutory Dilemma

If neighboring communities impose conflicting fluoridation rules, utilities would be forced into a no-win situation—unable to comply with one set of requirements without violating the other. This uncertainty increases customer confusion, generates customer complaints, and diverts resources away from maintaining safe, reliable water service.

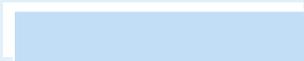
### Real-World Consequences

Communities that remove fluoride see dental problems and treatment costs spike within a few years. In Juneau, Alaska, cavity treatment costs more than doubled for children under six after fluoridation ended.<sup>6</sup> In Calgary, Canada, kids' dental infections rose 700% — pushing the city to reinstate fluoride in 2025 after more than a decade of worse oral health and higher care costs.<sup>7</sup>

# Dental Care Access Across Kentucky<sup>8</sup>



Less than five dentists practice in these counties



Six or more dentists practice in these counties

**Dental Professional Shortage Areas are defined as locations where the population to provider ratio is more than 5,000 to 1, based on geographic range or population.**

## Sources:

1. [America's Health Rankings: KY](#)
2. [CareQuest Institute's State Oral Health Dashboard](#)
3. [Facts About Return on Investment of Oral Health Interventions](#)
4. [Kentucky Oral Health Coalition Fluoride FAQ 2023](#)
5. [2026 Facts & Fiscal Notes](#)
6. [BMC Oral Health, "Effect of Community Water Fluoridation on Caries Disparities in Permanent Teeth among Children," 2018](#)
7. [Dentistry IQ: Why Calgary reversed its decision on fluoride after 10 years](#)
8. [Health Resources and Services Administration, as of July 2025](#)

