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Island Forum: Fluoridated water is unsafe for babies

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In 2006 the CDC and ADA advised that infants should not consume fluoridated water. But public health agencies and water districts have failed to warn parents of this. Mercer Island's tap water — which comes from Seattle Public Utilities — contains around 200 times more fluoride than mother's milk and is not safe for infants.

The water that Mercer Island buys from Seattle contains industrial waste fluoride called "silicofluoride," which contains arsenic and lead, and also leaches lead from pipes. Studies show that lead and fluoride both reduce IQ.

A mother's breast milk provides complete nutrition for babies, but is virtually fluoride free. A baby's kidneys are only 20 percent developed and cannot excrete fluoride and lead well. As early as eight weeks, most babies are consuming some formula, often made with tap water. Fluoride is unnecessary and causes harm. Babies drink up to four times more liquids for their weight, as do adults, and ingest too much fluoride if fluoridated water is used for formula or drinking.

The FDA recognizes fluoride toxicity. For example, it requires that toothpaste labels recommend using only a pea-sized dab, and carry FDA warning statements "Do Not Swallow," but if you do swallow, "Call Poison Control." There is 0.25 mg of fluoride in a pea-sized amount of fluoridated toothpaste, which we should not swallow — the same as in one glass of fluoridated water.

The FDA also requires fluoride toothpaste to display "Drug Facts." The Washington Board of Pharmacy defines fluoride for ingestion as a prescription drug. Not even a pharmacist can sell fluoride without a prescription. Yet Seattle forces Mercer Island to distribute this drug to everyone without a prescription, without individual consent, and without limits on the quantity consumed.

Prior to any FDA drug approval, extensive efficacy and safety studies are required, yet no such high quality studies have ever been done on fluoridation materials. Fluoride is an unapproved drug.

The CDC and ADA admit that 41 percent of our adolescents have dental fluorosis — obviously a poor bargain. That's up from 10 percent before fluoridation. Dental fluorosis is an undisputed bio-marker of early toxic fluoride exposure. Over 25 human studies report that when dental fluorosis increases, damage to the brain also increases, resulting in IQ reduction.

Although EPA administrators support fluoridation, EPA scientists strongly oppose it, along with over 3,800 professionals who have signed a petition to halt fluoridation due to health risks.

The CDC, the ADA, the EPA and many peer-reviewed studies agree that infants who regularly ingest fluoridated water directly or in their formula are at risk of harm.

"The toxicity of fluoride is so great, and the purported benefits are so small — if there are any at all — that requiring everyone to ingest it borders on criminal behaviour on the part of government," according to the EPA Headquarters Union.

Mercer Island should demand that Seattle deliver "just water." Meanwhile, the City of Mercer Island should provide notices in water billings and on its website that parents should avoid using fluoridated public water for making infant formula.