

Water

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— in adults as well as children.”

Almost any substance can be unsafe at high levels, advocates point out. Take Vitamin D, for example. It’s essential to our health, yet an overdose can kill you.

None of this sways fluoridation opponents who are taking to the streets — and the Internet — to press their concerns. They held rallies outside City Hall Aug. 21 and 22. A petition on the website Change.org has gained more than 2,000 signatures. And they say they will launch an initiative petition to ban fluoridation.

Opponents say the mineral is a toxin that can damage health, and putting it in our water amounts to medicating us without consent. They also raise red flags about the impact on our environment.

“We have some of the best drinking water in the country. Don’t mess with it,” says Kim Kaminski, executive director of Oregon Citizens for Safe Drinking Water, one of several anti-fluoridation groups in Oregon. “If we really want to protect children’s teeth there are much better ways to achieve that goal without putting toxic waste into our drinking water. The problem is not fluoride. The problem is that people don’t have access to dental care.”

Advocates point to statistics showing that Oregon’s dental health is at crisis point. Toothache is a leading reason for children — especially poor children of color — missing school days. More than 35 percent of Oregon children have untreated decay, compared to 15 percent in Washington. And one in five have rampant tooth decay, which

is seven or more untreated cavities.

Jim Smith, a dentist who volunteers for Mission of Mercy and Give Kids a Smile, sees hundreds of people who don’t have access to affordable dental care. And he volunteers in Vancouver, Wash., where the water contains fluoride, as well as in Oregon where it does not.

“There is a big difference across the river with how extensive cavities are, and in what percentage of kids have rampant tooth decay,” he says. “There’s a big difference on both sides of the water and the difference

‘It’s very difficult to change people’s behavior. We’re doing all we can in those areas’

is fluoride.”

Health policy nonprofit, Upstream brought together the “Everyone Deserves Healthy Teeth Coalition,” 60 different groups that support the fluoride plan.

Just about every health group in the state has signed on, including the Oregon Medical Association, OHSU, Kaiser and Legacy. Social justice groups backing fluoridation include: The African American Health Coalition, the Urban League of Portland, the Coalition of Communities of

Color, the African Women’s Coalition, the Latino Network, and OPAL Environmental Justice.

The issue has divided Portland, but not along the usual right-left faultlines. Occupy Portland along with some grassroots social justice and environmental advocates oppose the plan. So do some conservatives and libertarians along a host of national and international activists who say they will seek to ban fluoridation with a statewide initiative.

They have two years to collect 29,786 signatures, which must be handed in four months before a vote, which could come in either May or November 2014.

Arguments against fluoridation focus on the dangers of too much fluoride. Excess fluoride has been linked to health risks such as loss of bone, kidney impairments, thyroid and endocrine disorders.

Opponents point out that we now have fluoride toothpastes to protect our teeth. Hundreds of foods also contain some fluoride: from apple and grape juice, sodas and cookies, to wine and pot pies.

“How much is too much?” asks Mireaya Medina, a lifelong Portlander, now working in the social justice field. “I’m not sure it prevents cavities because that’s about people having adequate access to healthcare and dental care.”

Medina is concerned about the impact of fluoridation on people with osteoporosis or kidney disease. She notes that a substantial number of people say they are sensitive to fluoride and suffer from stomach problems,



Jim Smith

rashes and other ill effects. She wonders if corporate interests are behind the push to add fluoride to our water. And she says governments shouldn’t add chemicals to our water without asking us if we want them.

“I don’t know if fluoride is the answer — especially being forced on people. I would say it’s a larger issue that we should be demanding equal access to quality, affordable medical and dental care for everyone.”

So why don’t we just focus on brushing, flossing and going to the dentist? Jim Smith says teeth brushing campaigns and information are already underway, but there are a lot of reasons why people don’t go to the dentist. Dental care is expensive and many parents don’t have time or energy to practice the best dental hygiene.

“It’s very difficult to change people’s behavior,” he says. “We’re doing all we can in those areas.”

Shopping

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Gap is offering 30 percent off until Aug. 29. Kmart is taking off 20 percent until Aug. 19.

SUPPLIES

Wal-Mart is pricing 100 items, ranging from lunch bags to notebooks, at 88 cents throughout August.

Bring in an old binder to Staples, and the office supply store will give you \$2 off a new one. Staples is also selling a discount card for \$10 that will give

you 15 percent off school supplies until Sept. 15. It’s only worth it if you expect to spend more than \$70. But check the restrictions first: You can’t use it on pricier items like calculators and flash drives.



And every week until Labor Day, Office Depot is selling a select number of products for pocket change. You can find scissors for 8 cents and pocket folders for a penny.

Autism


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personnel. Go to the source of a rumor and have a conversation. Not everything on listservs, Facebook, and in emails is accurate. Do not jump to judgment. Parents’ only goal should be to ensure that everyone works collaboratively on behalf of the child.

The ultimate goal is to promote a successful experience for children and parents. By proactively and positively working with the school, challenges can be minimized and trust built.

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