Voluntary addition of fluoride to bottled water

Up until now, bottled or packaged water has not been permitted to contain added fluoride. This has now changed, with the recent approval by Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) of the voluntary addition of fluoride to bottled or packaged water. Manufacturers will be able to add fluoride to a level similar to that in tap water (0.6-1.0mg/litre). As the addition is voluntary, unfluoridated bottled water will be still be available. The label will indicate whether the water contains fluoride (1).

Dietary Guidelines for Children and Adolescents in Australia recommend water as the best drink (2). Most tap water in Australia is fluoridated, as fluoride is important in the mineralization of bones and teeth. Fluoridated water is one of the primary reasons for the decline in tooth decay in Australian children over the last few decades. However it now appears that dental decay is again on the rise, with one of the reasons put forward being the replacement of fluoridated tap water with bottled water (3). Fluoridated bottled water will provide a nutritionally equivalent alternative for tap water, especially for those in non-fluoridated areas.

Bottled water is often used to make up infant formula where the water supply may be questionable in terms of safety and purity. As fluoridated bottled water is equivalent to fluoridated tap water it may be used to make up infant formula. It must be prepared safely and hygienically and according the manufacturers instructions. Parents and carers need to be made aware that spring, sparkling and soda water must not be used to prepare infant formula.

References.


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