

# Health Officials Delayed Report Linking Fluoride to Brain Harm

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✓ Fact Checked

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## STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- › The release of the National Toxicology Program's (NTP) systematic review of fluoride's neurotoxicity was blocked by government officials and concealed from the public since May 2022
- › Fluoride Action Network's lawsuit against the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to ban the deliberate addition of fluoridating chemicals to U.S. drinking water has been on hold waiting for the release of the NTP report
- › Prior to the NTP report's scheduled release in May 2022, it was shared with members of dental groups like the American Dental Association, which urged officials to alter the report
- › After a court order, the NTP report was released, showing that out of 55 studies included, 52 found that increased fluoride exposure was associated with decreases in child IQ
- › The meta-analysis noted that no safe exposure level could be confirmed, including exposure to fluoride levels found in artificially fluoridated water

In 2015, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention labeled community water fluoridation as one of the 10 greatest public health achievements of the 20th century.<sup>1</sup> To this day, relatively few consumers are aware of water fluoridation's sordid history or the battle that's been going on behind the scenes to get this toxin out of U.S. drinking water.

I've been warning of the risks for well over a decade and have been ridiculed as a result. In one example from 2013, an article published by mainstream media outlet Slate scoffed at the idea of fluoride as a neurotoxin, insulting me directly in the process.<sup>2</sup>

Vindication is upon us, however, following the court-ordered release of the National Toxicology Program's (NTP) systematic review of fluoride's neurotoxicity – a release that was blocked by government officials and concealed from the public since May 2022.<sup>3</sup>

## **Fluoride Lawsuit Delayed for Years, Waiting on NTP Report**

Paul Connett, Ph.D., founder of the Fluoride Action Network (FAN), and Stuart Cooper, the current executive director of FAN, have been instrumental in catalyzing the movement to remove fluoride from water supplies in the U.S. as well as internationally. FAN filed a historic lawsuit against the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in federal court.

In 2016, FAN and coalition partners filed a petition asking the EPA to ban the deliberate addition of fluoridating chemicals to U.S. drinking water under Section 21 of the Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA).

The EPA dismissed FAN's petition, prompting the lawsuit challenging the EPA's denial. Although the EPA filed a motion to dismiss the case, the motion was denied by the court in 2017.<sup>4</sup> The trial was held in June 2020, but the judge was unable to make a final ruling.<sup>5</sup>

At the time, he requested more information, including the NTP's systematic review of fluoride's neurotoxicity, as well as the benchmark dose analysis of fluoride's neurotoxicity.<sup>6</sup> Status hearings for the case have been delayed since. In December 2021, an update from FAN explained:<sup>7</sup>

*"The document the Court wanted was the systematic review of fluoride's neurotoxicity from the National Toxicology Program's (NTP). The NTP spent 4-5 years and at least a million dollars to produce two draft systematic reviews<sup>8</sup> on*

*fluoride's neurotoxicity. Both draft reviews stated, 'NTP concludes that fluoride is presumed to be a cognitive neurodevelopmental hazard to humans.'*

*However, on February 9, 2021, seven months after the trial ended, the NTP wrote a private statement, not released to the press or to the public, that it would not complete its systematic review.*

*Instead, NTP wrote that it would do a 'state of the science' report on fluoride's neurotoxicity. The public learned of NTP's private statement after lawyers representing the U.S. EPA in the TSCA trial submitted it into the record on February 22, 2021 ...*

*The National Toxicology Program is well aware that the Court is waiting for its document. The presumption is that powerful forces within the National Institutes of Health were behind the ending of the NTP's systematic review and that they may be involved in the 'state of the science' report as well."*

Multiple delays, including cancelations and rescheduling, followed, with the EPA continuing to ask that the trial be delayed indefinitely until NTP published the report.

Finally, at a January 2023 hearing, FAN reported, "the judge acknowledged that "justice delayed is justice denied," ultimately ruling against them. The court directed the plaintiffs and defendants to start the process of adjudicating whether the final NTP report and accompanying agency comments ought to be made public in preparation for the final phase of the trial."<sup>9</sup>

## **Dental Groups Urged Officials to Alter NTP Fluoride Report**

Reports suggest that prior to the NTP report's scheduled release in May 2022, it was shared with members of dental groups like the American Dental Association. Linda Birnbaum, who was NTP director until 2019, said the report was set to be released until, "They were blocked." Capital & Main reported a clear conflict, as dental groups got ahold of the NTP report and worried its findings would threaten the future of water fluoridation:<sup>10</sup>

*"Leading up to the report's intended release, individuals from dental organizations including the American Dental Association (ADA) scrutinized the report's scientific credibility in communications with staff from other dental groups and health agencies including the National Institutes of Health and the NTP, divisions of HHS, records show.*

*This January, Birnbaum issued a scathing legal declaration as part of the lawsuit, writing, 'The decision to set aside the results of an external peer review process based on concerns expressed by agencies with strong policy interests on fluoride suggests the presence of political interference in what should be a strictly scientific endeavor.'*

*... If federal health agencies shared the report with outside organizations, 'That was completely inappropriate,' said Birnbaum. 'It's either everybody gets a chance to look at it, or only very restricted government entities,' Birnbaum added. 'That trust, I would say, was broken.'*

*In a February 2022 email to various senior health officials including HHS Assistant Secretary for Health Rachel Levine, ADA senior manager for strategic advocacy and public policy Robert Burns asked the NTP to 'exclude – or carefully consider how to characterize – any lingering neurotoxin claims' from the upcoming report.*

*He wrote that 'such claims are often taken out of context,' and might 'undermine national, state, and local efforts to expand community water fluoridation' at the CDC's recommended levels."*

## **NTP Report – 52 of 55 Studies Link Fluoride to Lower IQ**

So, what did the NTP report<sup>11</sup> reveal about fluoride's neurotoxicity? Out of 55 studies included in the review, 52 found that increased fluoride exposure was associated with decreases in child IQ.

"Our meta-analysis confirms results of previous meta-analyses and extends them by including newer, more precise studies ... The data support a consistent inverse association between fluoride exposure and children's IQ," the report found.<sup>12</sup> While some have stated that the data only apply to water fluoride concentrations above those commonly found in U.S. drinking water, NTP didn't agree, stating:<sup>13</sup>

*"We do not agree with this comment ... our assessment considers fluoride exposures from all sources, not just water ... because fluoride is also found in certain foods, dental products, some pharmaceuticals, and other sources ... Even in the optimally fluoridated cities ... individual exposure levels ... suggest widely varying total exposures from water combined with fluoride from other sources.*

*... We have no basis on which to state that our findings are not relevant to some children or pregnant people in the United States ... Several of the highest quality studies showing lower IQs in children were done in optimally fluoridated (0.7 mg/L) areas...many urinary fluoride measurements exceed those that would be expected from consuming water that contains fluoride at 1.5 mg/L."*

## **No Safe Level of Fluoride in Water**

The report also identified a drop of about seven IQ points over a fluoride range of 0.2 to 1.5 mg/L, which a peer reviewer described as "substantial ... That's a big deal."<sup>14</sup> The meta-analysis noted that no safe exposure level could be confirmed, including exposure to fluoride levels found in artificially fluoridated water.<sup>15</sup> The next hearing for FAN's lawsuit against the EPA is set for April 11, 2023.<sup>16</sup>

FAN obtained documents via the Freedom of Information Act that further showed dental groups' attempts to "water down the report." FAN explained:<sup>17</sup>

*"When the NTP held firm, these agencies got HHS Assistant Administrator Rachel Levine to block its release. Only one historical example exists of an NTP*

*report being blocked from release, a report on the carcinogenicity of asbestos-contaminated talc.*

*Talc industry groups conducted an aggressive lobbying campaign, enlisting friendly congresspeople to intervene. FAN was able to force today's release of the NTP report by using leverage from the ongoing lawsuit against the EPA.*

*Fluoridation defenders have falsely claimed draft versions of the report had been 'rejected' by a National Academies committee. In fact, the committee recommended that NTP clarify their methods and reasoning for reaching their conclusions because the issue was considered so contentious. The NTP has done that in the report ...*

*There is now little question that a large body of scientific evidence supports a conclusion that fluoride can lower child's IQ, including at exposure levels from fluoridated water ... With the release of this report, dental interests may have to rethink their denial of the evidence that fluoridation can reduce children's IQ."*

**97% of Western Europe Has Rejected Water Fluoridation**

If the U.S. got it wrong about water fluoridation after declaring it a top public health achievement, it makes you wonder what else they're wrong about. And it's important to understand that water fluoridation is not the norm worldwide. In fact, 97% of people living in western Europe drink nonfluoridated water, including those in:<sup>18</sup>

Austria	Belgium	Denmark
Finland	France	Germany
Greece	Iceland	Italy
Luxembourg	Netherlands	Northern Ireland

Norway	Portugal	Scotland
Sweden	Switzerland	

Fluoride in drinking water is an industrial waste product from the phosphate fertilizer industry.<sup>19</sup> More than 300 studies have shown fluoride's toxic effects on the brain,<sup>20</sup> including 2006 National Research Council review that suggested fluoride exposure may be associated with brain damage, endocrine system disruption and bone cancer.<sup>21</sup>

In 2012, Harvard researchers also revealed that children living in high-fluoride areas had significantly lower IQ scores than those who lived in low-fluoride areas<sup>22</sup> and suggested high fluoride exposure may have an adverse effect on children's neurodevelopment.

A study of Mexican women and children also raised concern, showing that higher exposure to fluoride while in utero is associated with lower scores on tests of cognitive function in childhood, both at the age of 4 and 6 to 12 years.<sup>23</sup>

Each 0.5 milligram per liter increase in pregnant women's fluoride levels was associated with a reduction of 3.15 and 2.5 points on the children's scores on the General Cognitive Index (GCI) of the McCarthy Scales of Children's Abilities and the Wechsler Abbreviated Scale of Intelligence (WASI), respectively.

Fluorosilicic acid, which is the fluoride chemical added to drinking water, may also be contaminated with additional harmful compounds, including lead and arsenic. Children, in particular, are at risk from ingesting fluoride, but they are exposed to the same levels in drinking water as adults. According to Steven Gilbert, Ph.D., founder and director of the Institute of Neurotoxicology and Neurological Disorders:<sup>24</sup>

*"From the 1950s the PHS [Public Health Service] recommendation for the concentration of fluoridated water has been 1.0 mg/L (milligrams per liter or ppm) for most of the U.S., with a range of 0.7 to 1.2 mg/L. In 2015, this recommendation was lowered to 0.7 mg/L to reduce the toxic side effects of fluoride ingestion while attempting to maintain its beneficial effects.*

*For toxicological assessment, ingested doses are typically adjusted by body weight. Kids eat more, breathe more, and drink more than adults on a body weight basis so they will have higher fluoride doses than adults. Moreover, child organ systems such as the brain and bones are still developing, making them more vulnerable to the toxic effects of fluoride."*

Hopefully, now that the NTP review has been released, the truth about water fluoridation's toxicity will come out, and the archaic practice can be ended in the U.S. and worldwide.

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