Why do we mass medicate with fluoride in our tap water\_ (fro...

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**SPEAKERS**

Bret, Heather

**Heather** 00:04

Next question, why is fluoride the one supplement we mass medicate with and what are the potential benefits and harms especially for babies so again we could go forever and in fact I have done enough I've done enough just literature review on this that this is now my I don't know if you get these but I get like weekly updates from the Princeton library about new papers that I might be interested in and like fully half of them are about the risks of fluoride fluoridation in water supplies and to salmon and to like to just just everything so yeah, why how but but the question at some level is well, there's three different questions here and this could fill many many hours but I don't actually know the history. Actually my my do know some of this history. It's preposterous. of how it is that we came out Wait, it's industrial waste or something? Isn't it? Okay. Tell you tell the story. Well, I

**Bret** 00:57

don't know it. Well, yeah, I should dig deeper. But yeah, basically, it's a it's an industrial byproduct. Yeah. And

**Heather** 01:04

not all floor. I like Florida and lm floor. Well, rain is an element.

**Bret** 01:08

Yes. But okay. First of all, fluorine is the element, highly caustic elements. We're talking about fluoride salts. But there's also an interesting nuance here, where if I recall correctly, the the evidence which is weaker than you would imagine for fluorides benefits is actually a different salt than fluoridation. There it is, right? Yeah.

**Heather** 01:32

No one it's actually like, so it seems pretty good that so you end up with there's some the early work that caused the fluoridation to start happening in municipal water supplies, actually, I think seems pretty good. But the fact that it's a different form of fluoride than what is now being put into the water supplies is the is the big crazy part of the story that we're not talking about.

**Bret** 02:00

Now. I wish I wish we had the the names of the two salts at our fingertips, but it's been too long. But in any case, a it is insane. to medicate this way. Because that it does, there's no controlling for who drinks how much water, right? So this would be an insane way to go about this process, even if this were justified. But as I recall, the evidence is far weaker than it should be. And there is evidence, there's evidence that conflicts with it, where you see the same increase in bone strength and teeth durability in populations that didn't fluoridate their water. But anyway,

**Heather** 02:38

I said, quick, what about fluoride toothpaste? I think that fluoride in toothpaste is the same stuff that's putting the municipal water supplies Right, right. Also the wrong fluoride salt. Yeah, I think

**Bret** 02:46

and I'm trying to I don't want to reverse the two salts. But in any case, this is not however, the only case. And in fact, I believe the evidence in the other case, where we do this is actually that it is positive and worthwhile. What's iodine in salt? Hmm. So iodine in salt,

**Heather** 03:07

it's interesting. You say that, because we like we I don't buy us, right, I salt at this point,

**Bret** 03:12

right. And I don't complain about it. Because we get enough of this stuff in interacting with the world there enough iodine, the basic point is you're trying to you're trying to hedge out a deficiency. Yeah. And there's no value to it above that, as far as we know. But the deficiency is very serious.

**Heather** 03:30

But I mean, it's also possible to, to have too much no, yes. Short, I mean, short term.

**Bret** 03:35

This one one wants to find a happy medium. And my sense is, we're getting enough iodine just by virtue of the fact that we, you know, go out to eat occasionally, and, you know, there's salt and everything. Why not anymore? That's true. And actually, maybe that should alter behavior. But my sense is that the I so the ionizing of salt solved major issues where it

**Heather** 04:01

was done. I don't remember where iodine comes into the diet. Naturally. I feel like it might be one of these things that's in trace amounts and things like dark leafy greens and meat. I believe

**Bret** 04:11

that's right. Yeah. Read Me. But But in any case, I think the the fluoridation story and the iodine story go in opposite directions. Now, no doubt there is a less crude way because the iodine issue has exactly the same problem as the fluoride issue, which is that depending upon how much salt you eat, this could have very different effects. Yeah. And so it's not a good way of medicating because there's no way to titrate it.

**Heather** 04:39

Yeah. Incidentally. So Melinda here writes, I find it frustrating that opposing the mass fluoridation of water is considered so fringe, this is one of the places where, you know, Portland, the populace of Portland, that you know, cannot figure out how to get our government to stop the assault on businesses and such that are still happening. Apparently, still. Up in the pearl district last night, however, have have kept fluoridation out of our water supply.

**Bret** 05:07

They did and I don't know if you recall this but

**Heather** 05:11

this happened before we moved here as well I refer to it as you know, the it's it's sort of settled now like it's always an attempt I guess it will come back but it's pretty established like no Portland is not going to fluoridate the water

**Bret** 05:24

supply. When will my fluoridated water? Yeah, like Olympia.

**Heather** 05:27

Now Yeah, here's how I didn't even know we were on a well in Olympia. So I didn't pay attention. Olympia didn't

**Bret** 05:31

Florida either. And you know why? Because evergreen faculty got in the way of it. So this is actually a really interesting case where the thing that went crazy started out not so crazy, or at least is not crazy on different topics.

**Heather** 05:48

Many of the same people. Right, so

**Bret** 05:51

anyway, I think, you know, as is so often the case there's there's a story to be told here about, you know, where, where once you I mean, look, most of our faculty colleagues were crazy, but those were several generations down the road of faculty they were only the tiniest number of founders still at the college when we got there and

**Heather** 06:11

you know, one of the founders that we knew or knew by reputation were crazy. No, they were all terrific. They were great

**Bret** 06:17

the founders and the few people who were hired in the first few years of the college

**Heather** 06:22

like like you know, Mike Bueb who was a chemist Yeah, I never we never I at least never talked to him about fluoridation but I imagine that he was opposed to fluoridation

**Bret** 06:33

Yeah, right. Oh no doubt Yeah. No doubt Yeah. And you know so in any way we knew some of these people the handful of people from the very early years of the college were eccentric Mark crazy and the anyway they're they're early opposition was the reason that Olympia didn't didn't Florida

**Heather** 06:54

someone asks I have a well I don't have fluoride in my drinking water what effect is not getting fluoride get so you know the really the only thing that fluoride is supposedly doing is is

**Bret** 07:11

helping bones and teeth

**Heather** 07:12

yeah and and not in the form that it is in toothpaste and and water municipal water sorry I'm stalled out so yeah, like you know, how how are we supposed to get it? Well, I you know, I don't know I actually put forward I don't know I like I'm

**Bret** 07:31

well I have very little doubt that the answer is if you eat a diet that is

**Heather** 07:37

feel like this is it Yeah. But so like, I mean, we pulled we stopped using Florida, Florida toothpaste on with certainly for our kids because kids are wanting to swallow this stuff. And for us years ago, and you know, much to the chagrin of our dentists when we tell them yeah. So, cast cereal is everything added right? Like a multivitamin with some grains.

**Bret** 08:00

Claire sanguine who I read as Carl Sagan. Seafood, and seaweed has it total. Here's the thing, we've stopped eating seafood out of the Pacific, which is a huge loss to us. Because of all of the radio nucleotides that were spilled into the Pacific, after Fukushima, which have made their way into at least tuna and salmon at alarming levels, at least. And so these things are not it's not easily the data is not easily available now. But right after Fukushima happened, this stuff was measured, and the levels were absolutely they weren't high in any fish. Yeah, but the frequency that they were found in tuna was 100%. Widespread. Yeah. And it was very common in salmon. And so anyway, we on the advice of Arnie Gunderson, stopped eating Pacific seafood and without data, we haven't gone back to it, there's actually very little reason to think those levels will have dropped because the half lives of the important radionuclides are very long not super long, but 30 years so anyway, yes, eating seafood would be a great way to deal with it but we're now in a pickle which is that all of our seafood comes out of the Pacific and we don't consider that safe enough because of the strontium and cesium that was lost in the Pacific

**Heather** 09:26

Yeah. And yes, an excess of fluoride turns your teeth brown that that is actually as our if I remember correctly. How it was how the original fluoridation was understood to be helping but some town in Colorado I think happened to have a lot of fluoride in the drinking water from underground sources. I don't remember the specifics. And so some dentists were just seeing a lot a lot of people with with brown teeth, but also with fewer cavities sort of noticed that as an after effects, like maybe brownness and and no cavities is correlated and attracted back to the fluoride that salt and fluoride that was actually both protective against cavities and tended to de whiten your teeth. Mm hmm. Yeah. All right. Hey guys, that was a clip from our monthly private q&a that you can get access to at my Heather, hirings Patreon. And you can also get access there to all of the past paid subscriber content. So please consider joining us there.

**Bret** 10:24

Did you mention that these private Q and A's are the key to living a better life and living to tell the

**Heather** 10:29

tale I forgot to do that these private Q and A's are in fact the key to living a better life and what living to tell the tale living to tell the tale. Go ahead live to tell the tale. Join us there.

**Bret** 10:40

See ya.