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# News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **Fluoride – A vital public health tool for older adults**

(Las Vegas, Nev. – September 11, 2000) – The fluoridation of drinking water has been identified by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) as one of the top ten public health achievements of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. In Clark County, fluoride was added to the county's drinking water on March 2, 2000. However, on November 7, 2000, citizens will have the opportunity to decide whether recommended levels of this mineral will remain in the water.

The Colorado River provides most of the drinking water to the Las Vegas Valley, and while there is naturally occurring fluoride in the water, the amounts are low. Currently, fluoride is being added to the county's water supply at 0.5 parts per million. The amount, combined with the levels that already occur at 0.3 parts per million, will bring the local water supply within the levels of fluoridation recommended by the CDC.

According to Dr. Donald Kwalick, chief health officer for the Clark County Health District, "Fluoridation is the most effective way to promote the dental health of the population, regardless of their ability to access dental care, and provides oral

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health benefits to people of all ages.” He adds that Clark County has lagged behind the rest of the nation in implementing this important and effective preventive health measure. Dr. Kwalick cites the fact that before fluoride was added to the drinking water only 2 percent of people in the state were consuming fluoridated water, compared to 62 percent for the nation. Moreover, Las Vegas was one of the last major cities in the United States to fluoridate its water.

In mature teeth, fluoride supports resistance to decay and promotes remineralization, a process that aids in repairing early decay before damage is even visible and when gums start to recede.

Critics of fluoridation believe that people are receiving doses from too many sources. While they cite an increase in ailments ranging from dental fluorosis, Alzheimer’s, Down Syndrome, cancer, kidney failure and bone disease, numerous studies, tests and reviews show that fluoride, used in recommended concentration, is not hazardous to human health.

For example, according to the CDC there is not accepted scientific demonstration of a link between optimally fluoridated water and Alzheimer’s Disease. The exact cause of Alzheimer’s has yet to be identified. Allegations of this link come from claims that fluoridated water leaches out of aluminum cookware when used for boiling water. An experiment was conducted to test this claim during which an attempt was made to measure the release of aluminum from cookware under conditions that would produce the largest release of aluminum. Throughout the trials, scientists were unable to leach out significant amounts of aluminum from cookware.

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Fluoride is a naturally occurring trace mineral found in plants, animals and soils, and is necessary to help build stronger bones and make teeth more resistant to decay. The mineral occurs naturally in different water sources throughout the world, including rivers and oceans. Some areas contain high levels of naturally occurring fluoride in the water. Other areas, including Southern Nevada, contain less than ideal amounts needed to help prevent tooth decay.

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