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**The value of fluoridation of the water supplies**

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**Extract**

**Economic Aspects of Fluoridation**

The loss of working time both to school children and adults as a result of receiving restorative treatment for caries will probably be reduced by fluoridation.

It may be assumed that the direct cost of all types of restorative treatment for caries in this country is over £1 for each person each year. As has been shown earlier, artificial fluoridation will eventually reduce caries experience in children by well over a half; in adults, the reduction is expected to be by nearly one-half.

The cost of fluoridation varies with the size of the population served by the water supply and with the methods and chemicals used to achieve fluoridation. In the study areas in this country the annual cost of fluoridation is estimated to be about 10d. for each person served by the water supply. With the expected increase in the amount of water used by each person, the cost may rise slightly, but is unlikely to exceed 1s. a year in most areas within the near future.

In a country such as Britain, in which there is a shortage of dentists, probably the saving in dental manpower is more important than the eventual direct reduction in expenditure resulting from fluoridation. It has been calculated that if, as seems probable, an additional two million people each year use fluoridated water in the United States, by 1970 fluoridation will have reduced the amount of dental treatment required, assuming that all carious cavities are treated, by the equivalent of that undertaken by 10,000 dentists; this figure corresponds to nearly two-thirds of the dentists on the British Dentists Register. By that date it is expected that more people in the United States will be using fluoridated water than the present total population of Britain.

It is probable that similar benefits would accrue in Britain if artificial fluoridation of the water supplies were generally instituted. Within five years of its commencement it would begin to relieve the shortage of dentists to a significant and rapidly increasing extent. Eventually the reduction in the amount of restorative treatment for caries would enable greater attention to be paid to the treatment of periodontal and gingival diseases, which in older people cause a greater loss of teeth even than caries. Artificial fluoridation would therefore improve dental health in all its aspects.