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British Dental Journal. 1987 Mar 7;162 (5):170-173.

Has the decline of dental caries in English children made water fluoridation both unnecessary and uneconomic?

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Abstract

Epidemiological evidence of 5-year-old children living in non-fluoridated English communities between 1947 and 1980 indicates that a decline of caries experience began in the late 1950s or early 1960s. This steady decline accelerated in the mid- 1970s and was coincident with the general marketing of F toothpastes in the UK. The suggestion that this accelerated decline was entirely due to F toothpastes which are now carrying out the function of water fluoridation is examined and dismissed. The natural history of dental caries extends into adulthood, and this means that the cost-effectiveness of water fluoridation cannot be assessed on evidence solely from children. Taking into account the extension of caries into adulthood, it is concluded that water fluoridation is still necessary and economic, and will remain so for at least many decades.