

# Incorporating community water fluoridation communication into a health care curriculum

## A curriculum guide for dental and health care faculty

Dental and medical providers are a trusted source for health information. Health communication is central to health care and an essential skill set for students to develop. Effective health communication strategies can shape a patient's oral health decisions and meaningfully improve health outcomes. We've collected some activities and exercises for you to incorporate into your curriculum as you see fit. The goal is to teach students how to communicate effectively about community water fluoridation's positive health effects and address fluoride-hesitant sentiments.



## Learning Outcomes (Objectives):

- Identify health communication strategies to effectively communicate about the benefits of community water fluoridation.
- Illustrate how to use communication strategies to address fluoride-hesitant sentiments.
- Recognize the importance of patient-centered approaches for health communication.

## Learning Activities

**Read:** Fluoride for Texas  
Patient Conversation Guide  
[www.fluoridefortexas.org/spread-word/professional-toolkit](http://www.fluoridefortexas.org/spread-word/professional-toolkit)

Fluoride for Texas  
Advocacy Patient Guide  
[www.fluoridefortexas.org/spread-word/advocate-toolkit](http://www.fluoridefortexas.org/spread-word/advocate-toolkit)

**Watch:** Medscape Video  
Vaccine Communication with Parents: Best Practices:  
[www.medscape.com/viewarticle/882865](http://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/882865)

**Explore:** Fluoride for Texas  
[www.fluoridefortexas.org](http://www.fluoridefortexas.org)

American Academy of Pediatrics  
Campaign for Dental Health, I Like My Teeth  
[www.likemyteeth.org](http://www.likemyteeth.org)

Division of Oral Health  
National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Community Water Fluoridation  
[www.cdc.gov/fluoridation/index.html](http://www.cdc.gov/fluoridation/index.html)

American Dental Association, Fluoridation Facts  
[www.ada.org/en/public-programs/advocating-for-the-public/fluoride-and-fluoridation/fluoridation-facts](http://www.ada.org/en/public-programs/advocating-for-the-public/fluoride-and-fluoridation/fluoridation-facts)

## Learning Assessments

**Write** a 1½ to 2-page paper focused on effectively communicating about community water fluoridation. Reflect on the learning activities and explain what strategies you would use to communicate with patients. What techniques discussed in the Medscape video can be applied to discussions with patients about community water fluoridation. How would your approach differ among different patient populations?

**Develop** a three-minute talk to be delivered at a Town Hall meeting supporting the addition of community water fluoridation or opposing the removal of community water fluoridation. Use the Patient Conversation Guide and the other Learning Activities to guide your talk. Maximum speaking time is 180 seconds (3 minutes). Observers will offer feedback.

**Create** a one-page infographic for a population of your choice, which can be used to educate community members about the benefits of water fluoridation. Utilize the Fluoride for Texas website or the CDC's Community Water Fluoridation Data and Statistics website to identify fluoridation levels in your chosen community. (Use a tool like Canva.com to create the infographic.)

### Communication Simulation Exercises:

**Stump Your Classmate!** Conduct a 3-to-5-minute role-playing exercise. Simulate a discussion about community water fluoridation between a health care provider and a patient. Observers will provide feedback on the mock discussion.

- Patient's role: Research fluoride-hesitant beliefs which patients may be likely to raise. Present the fluoride-hesitant topic/issue you identified to your health care provider during your mock discussion.
- Provider's role: Utilize the learning activities to guide your response to your patient.

**Anticipatory Guidance Elevator Pitch:** The student will be given an impromptu patient persona (e.g., father of a toddler, elderly patient, etc.). Deliver anticipatory guidance in under one minute, which incorporates appropriate recommendations for that patient or caregiver. Be sure to include community water fluoridation support.