

BEIJING DECLARATION:

CALL TO ACTION TO PROMOTE ORAL HEALTH BY USING FLUORIDE IN CHINA AND SOUTHEAST ASIA

Subsequent to the *Global Consultation on Oral Health through Fluoride*, jointly convened by the World Health Organization (WHO), the FDI World Dental Federation and the International Association for Dental Research (IADR) in November 2006, a follow-on conference was convened jointly with the Chinese Stomatological Association (CSA). The conference took place on the 18th and 19th September 2007 in Beijing, China, and was attended by more than 70 experts from 12 countries including more than 40 experts from the People's Republic of China.

The experts in oral health stomatology noted that in both China and Southeast Asia:

- Changes in diet and lifestyle are exposing people to a greater risk of diet-related tooth decay as well as chronic diseases including diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and cancer.
- The increasing burden of tooth decay affects children, adults and the elderly, disrupts life and causes considerable pain, suffering and economic hardship.
- The prevalence of tooth decay is particularly high in children and that most tooth decay remains untreated which can result in dangerous infection, pain and loss of school days.

Taking account of the scientific evidence, as well as several WHO World Health Assembly resolutions, and other technical reports, the experts in oral health reaffirmed the following:

- Prevention of tooth decay by using fluoride is the most realistic way of reducing the burden of tooth decay in populations.
- The efficiency, cost-effectiveness, and safety of the daily use of optimal fluoride.
- The inadequate exposure in the Region to appropriate levels of fluoride for the prevention of tooth decay.
- The importance of national policies and programmes for the automatic administration of fluoride (such as water and salt fluoridation) and/or the topical use of fluoride (such as affordable and effective fluoride toothpaste).

The experts in oral health confirmed that:

- Fluoride toothpaste remains the most widespread and significant form of fluoride used globally and the most rigorously evaluated vehicle for fluoride use.
- The effectiveness of fluoride toothpaste has been assessed since the 1940's in over one hundred clinical trials and the anti-tooth decay (anti-caries) efficacy of fluoride toothpaste has been confirmed.
- Fluoride toothpaste is safe to use irrespective of low, normal or high fluoride exposure from other sources.

The experts in oral health strongly recommended:

- Promoting the use of effective fluoride toothpaste twice a day for the prevention of tooth decay.
- Toothbrushing with a pea-size amount of fluoride toothpaste in young children up to the age of 6 years should be supervised by a responsible adult to ensure that large quantities of toothpaste are not swallowed.
- Specific recommendations for the use of fluoride toothpaste in very young children should follow guidelines from the respective national authority.
- Governmental institutions promoting oral health and general health, the medical and dental professions, the educational system (e.g. health promotion in schools) and industry should take action to ensure that populations know the benefits of regular use of fluoride toothpaste and that fluoride toothpaste is made accessible and affordable.

Exposure to appropriate fluoride, in particular through fluoride toothpaste, will improve quality of life and enhance the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals by reducing the high dental disease burden of entire populations, especially children.

References:

1. Resolutions of the World Health Assembly related to fluoride (WHA 22.30/WHA 28.64/WHA42.39/WHA53.17/WHA60.17)

Note: The four convening organisations of this conference offer advice and technical support on any aspect of these recommendations.