

FLUORIDATION AND RISK COMMUNICATION

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Risk communication
is a relatively new field

Since the first national conference on risk communication in 1986, risk communication has matured and gained greater interest and attention among agencies, policymakers, the media, and the public.

Risk communication
deals with what might happen

A key barrier is the term “risk” itself -
how it is measured, described, and
perceived.

How risky is the world in which we live?

How well do we communicate that risk?

How risky is the world in which we live?

In 1900, the average life expectancy was about 45 years of age.

Today it is nearing 80.

How well do we communicate risk?

Conflicting risks and messages, difficulty of translating scientific information, and disagreement on what is the risk itself and how to assess it present problems.

“.05 probability”

versus

“5 of 100 people have an increased risk”

People's perceptions of the magnitude of risk are influenced by factors other than numerical data.

Risks perceived to ... are more accepted than risks perceived to ...

Be voluntary

Be under an individual's control

Have clear benefits

Be fairly distributed

Be natural

Be statistical

Be generated by a trusted source

Be familiar

Affect adults

Be imposed

Be controlled by others

Have little or no benefit

Be unfairly distributed

Be manmade

Be catastrophic

Be generated by an untrusted source

Be exotic

Affect children

NRC Report -Media Coverage

Fluoride study out

A closer look: Fluoride -Too much of a good thing on tap?

Reduction urged in maximum fluoride limit

Report raises a fluoride flag; Some areas get too much of a good thing

Study: Water should contain less fluoride

Study: Too Much Fluoride Can Be Bad

NAS panel calls for tougher fluoride standard

Panel: Too much fluoride in nation's water supply

Maximum fluoride limit reduction urged

Fluoride blamed for health woes

**Report raises flag on fluoride
Fluoride hazards reported**

**New fears about fluoride
Report revives debate over drinking-water risk**

**NRC Delivers Wake Up Call on Fluoride:
Current allowable levels linked to bone fractures,
tooth damage, and other toxic effects**

Barriers also exist in agencies' lack
of risk communication expertise

By better understanding the reasons people perceive risk as they do, we can communicate with various decision makers and audiences about these issues in terms and language relevant to their concerns.