

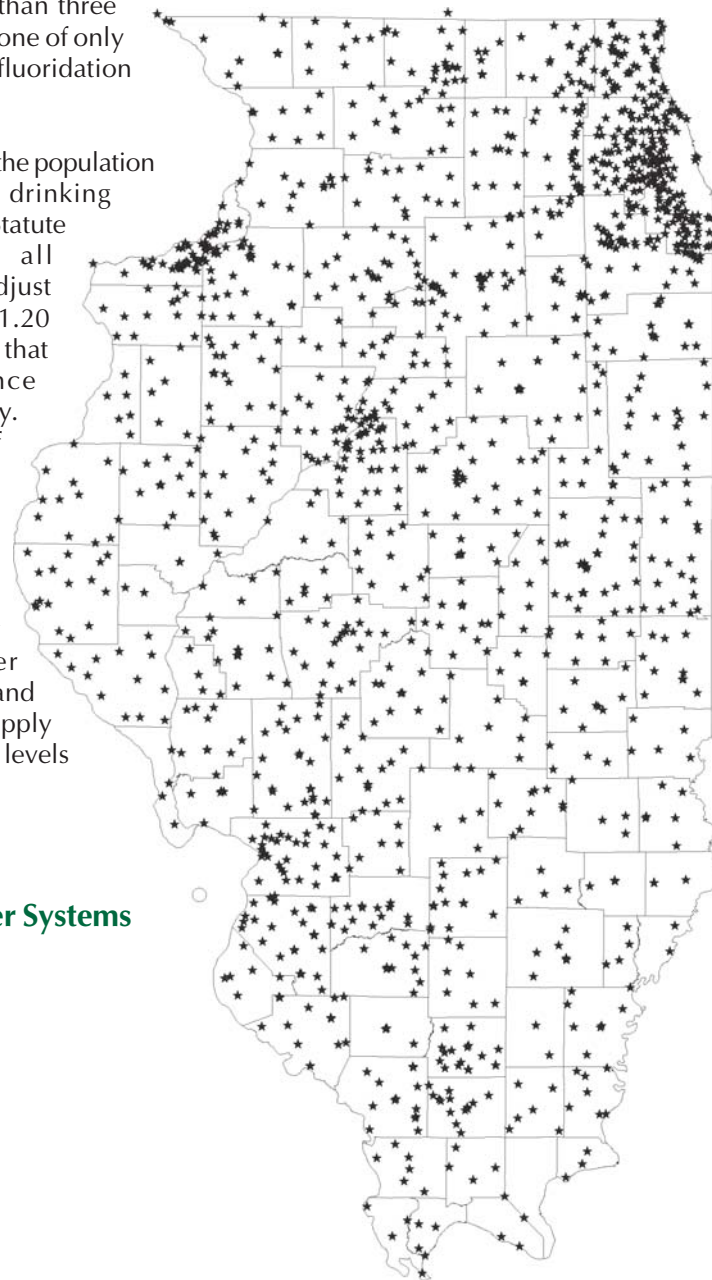
Statewide Efforts

to Improve Oral Health in Illinois

Community Water Fluoridation

Community water fluoridation is the most effective public health measure available to prevent and control dental decay and has been recognized as one of the greatest public health achievements of the 20th century. Illinois requires all community water systems to adjust fluoride to optimal levels. Dental decay is one of the most prevalent diseases in our society. Before community water fluoridation began in the 1940s, the average child had 10 or more tooth surfaces affected by dental decay. In contrast, the average child in 1992 had slightly more than three tooth surfaces decayed. Illinois is one of only eight states that have mandatory fluoridation laws.

Currently, more than 93 percent of the population in Illinois receives fluoridated drinking water. The Illinois Fluoridation Statute enacted in 1967 requires all community water systems to adjust fluoride to optimal levels (0.90 - 1.20 milligrams per liter). The result is that residents of Illinois experience significantly less dental decay. Since the health benefits of fluoridation are most beneficial when the fluoride level is maintained within this optimal range, the IDPH, Division of Oral Health works with the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency to monitor community water supplies and provide education and technical expertise to the water supply operators in order to keep fluoride levels optimal.



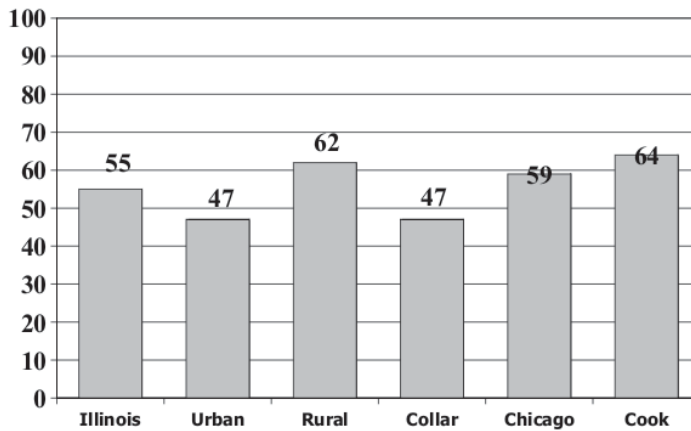
**Illinois Community Water Systems
July 2005**

Oral Health Status of Illinois Children

Healthy Smiles/Healthy Growth, a statewide oral health survey conducted in school year 2003-04, gathered the most reliable estimates to date of oral health status in Illinois children. This survey was funded through a grant by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and was conducted by the Illinois Department of Public Health in collaboration with communities across the state. The survey results demonstrated that a very large number of Illinois school children still suffer from preventable oral health problems, and lack basic preventive care (as determined by sealant prevalence). The survey also confirmed that significant oral health disparities exist.

Of 9,000 targeted and identified third-grade children, a total of 6,630 were screened during the 2003-2004 school year. The purpose was to obtain important information about cavity history (whether or not a child had evidence of any prior cavities), current untreated cavities, treatment urgency, presence of sealants, and body mass index (BMI), based on height and weight

Percentage of Children with Dental Cavity Experience, 2003-2004



measurements included in the screenings. The survey revealed that 55 percent of Illinois third-grade children have suffered the damaging effects of decay. Given that dental disease can be avoided almost entirely, this is an unacceptable statistic that represents a continuing public health challenge (see graphs). As a result of the information gathered through this survey, the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) intensified efforts to expand its school-based sealant program. (See map on page 10). As of 2006, 978,623 dental sealants have been applied to 399,645 children since the program's inception in 1986.