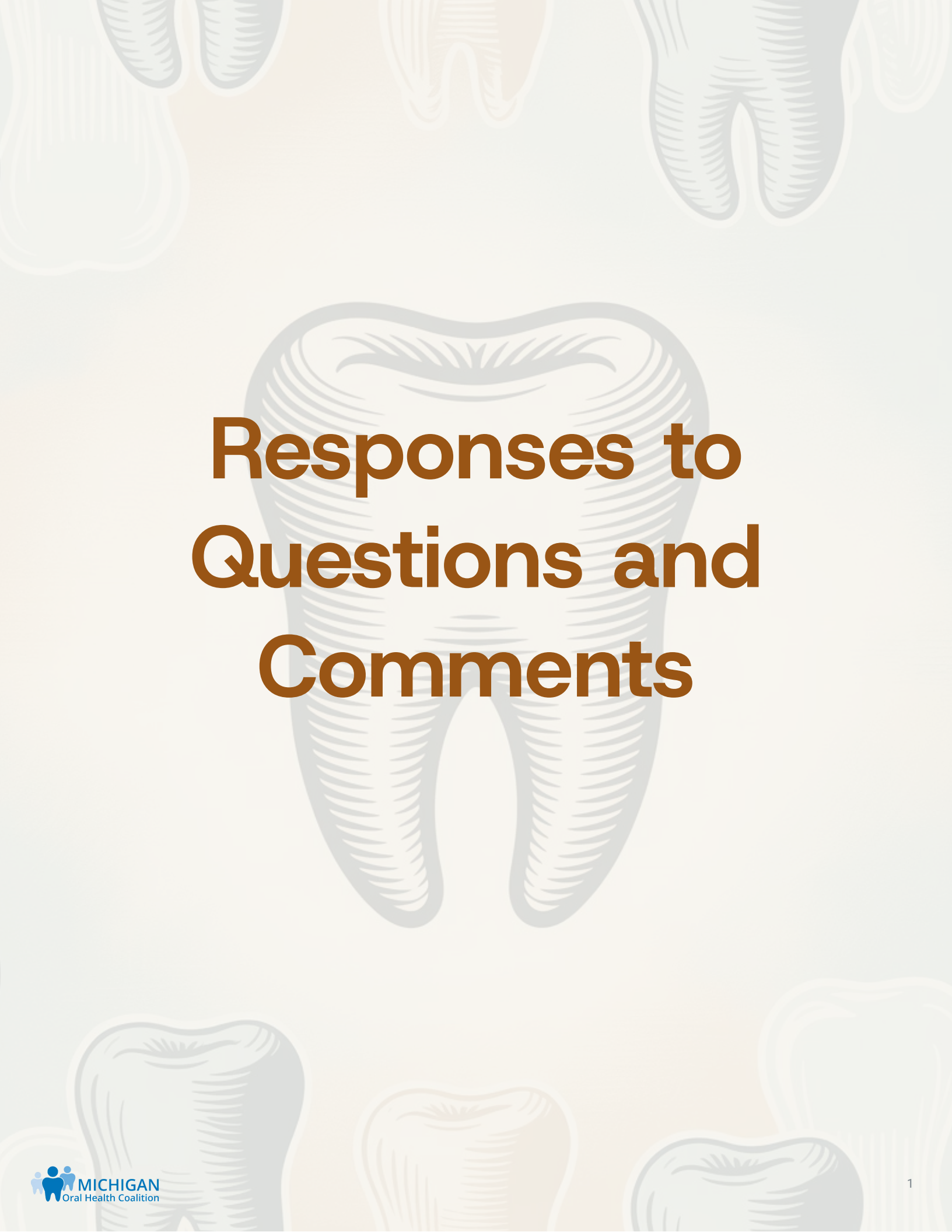




Responses to Questions and Comments

Responses to Questions and Comments

Comment

"What is fluoride?"¹³

Response

"Fluoride is natural. It is not something that people make in a lab. It is a part of nature and is all around us. It comes from a natural element called fluorine. Fluoride is found naturally in rocks and also in the water in rivers and oceans. We all get a little bit of fluoride every day because it is in the water we drink, the foods we eat, and even some of the fruit and vegetables we buy."

Strategy

Use plain, neutral, respectful language

Comment

"Ions are bad/man-made fluoride is unnatural."

Response

"We share the goal of safety. Fluoridation doesn't add a new substance people aren't already exposed to; the key is the amount. At the recommended level, the fluoride ion—natural or adjusted—helps protect teeth. Our water is routinely tested to stay within those limits." OR "Chemically, the body can't tell whether a fluoride ion started in rock or was adjusted at the plant—the ion is identical. What matters is that we keep it in the well-studied, low range."

Strategy

Use accessible analogies (many ions like calcium or sodium) are essential in small levels; toxicity depends on dose and context. Emphasize that there is no difference between "supplemental" and "natural" fluoridation. "Man-made" is an inaccurate term for supplemental fluoride.

Comment

"I don't understand how fluoridation works."

Response

"Water fluoridation is like wearing a seatbelt. It protects against the impact of acid attacks. It reduces risk. It is simple and easy to use. It not only protects the individual, but also protects other people in the car (or community)."

Strategy

Share analogies that make connections

Comment

"I am afraid fluoride is toxic."

Response

"It's normal to be cautious, and it is okay to have questions. Early on, people in Colorado Springs noticed that naturally fluoridated water came with fewer cavities. Scientists studied many towns, set a low, safe level, and began adjusting water—first in Grand Rapids, Michigan (1945). At these levels, research hasn't found consistent harm to the kidneys, thyroid, or the brain."

Strategy

Meet your audience where they are / Use neutral, respectful language

Responses to Questions and Comments

Comment

"It's mass medication/chemicalization."

Response

"Fluoride is a mineral that naturally occurs in many water sources. Adjusting fluoride levels for good dental health is similar to how we fortify many foods with essential vitamins and minerals."

Strategy

Reframing rather than rebutting arguments /
Share analogies that make connections

Comment

"Why do we need fluoride?"

Response

"Brushing and cutting sugar help, but cavities are hard to stop with habits alone. Tiny amounts of fluoride are attracted to the minerals in our teeth to strengthen enamel and repair early weak spots—one reason kids today have far fewer cavities and adults keep more teeth than past generations."

Strategy

Use plain, neutral, respectful language /
Solutions-oriented

Comment

"I'm just following the facts."

Response

"I have some information to share so that you can make your own decision. I hope it is helpful!" OR "I agree, facts first. Here are the facts I use: what's added, the exact level, and the test results that confirm it. Do you want to look at these together?"

Strategy

Meet your audience where they are / Use
neutral, respectful language

Comment

"I don't want to put my (children) at risk."

Response

"We all want the best for our families, and I can tell you care deeply about their health! I want to hear your concerns, and I want to work through them together."

Strategy

Meet your audience where they are / Establish
counternarrative around shared values (e.g.,
fairness, strong and healthy communities or
families)

Responses to Questions and Comments

Comment

"I heard fluoridation can lower your IQ and impact development."

Response

"Our shared goal is healthy mouths and healthy minds. At community levels, fluoridation helps prevent painful, costly decay; agencies set conservative limits and require routine testing to keep levels in a well-studied, low range."

Strategy

Contextualize with critiques of methodology (small sample sizes, high exposure levels, confounding variables, etc.). Use credibility checklists (peer review status, journal reputation, funding transparency). / Consider audience - for some, taking a fact-based approach will be less effective compared to other strategies / Meet your audience where they are

Comment

"It's a financial burden on taxpayers."

Response

"I hear the concern about costs. Fluoridation uses existing water systems to prevent problems before they're expensive—fewer emergency room visits, less uncompensated care, and more predictable local spending." OR "We all want to spend public dollars wisely. Good oral health lowers costly fillings, extractions, and emergency visits. Fluoridation helps protect household budgets and the public budget at the same time."

Strategy

Meet your audience where they are / Establish counternarrative around shared values (e.g., fairness, strong and healthy communities or families)

Comment

"It's an attack on personal freedom."

Response

"Personal freedom matters. Fluoridation helps protect our freedom to live, work, and learn, and stay free from avoidable pain and costs—so families can spend their time and resources on what matters."

Strategy

Affirm autonomy / Reframing rather than rebutting arguments / Validate concerns and emphasize open data, transparent review processes, and peer-reviewed debate

Comment

"Media only shows one side—they should platform all views equally." OR "The media leaves out details to push chemicals."

Response

"Fairness matters. But giving equal time to claims with very unequal evidence creates false balance. Just like we don't present 'seatbelts save lives' and 'seatbelts are harmful' as 50/50 - stronger evidence gets more space; weaker claims get context and caveats so people understand the difference."

Strategy

Discuss how giving equal weight to unfounded claims is false balance, not fairness.

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