



Residents ask if lack of fluoride led to fewer reactions

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Being in contact with Waterloo's water once made Robert Falla's skin crawl as he broke out in a bright red rash and had to keep from itching incessantly.

But since last May he said he's enjoyed a remarkable improvement in his skin condition, which never got a formal diagnosis from his doctor but seemed to be aggravated whenever he washed with local municipal water.

"It's 99 per cent improved," said Falla who contacted the Chronicle last February to express his concerns about the chemicals being used in the local water supply. "It started clearing up in the late spring and early summer.

"I thought it might have something to do with the nice weather returning."

But after learning that the majority of Waterloo hasn't been receiving fluoridated water since last May, he thinks there might be a more plausible explanation.

"I didn't have anything else to connect it to until last week when I read that there was no fluoride in the water," said Falla, a retiree who lives right next door to the water tower on Conservation Drive in Waterloo.

He's not the only one who's noticed an improvement. Of the people he's kept in contact with since first telling his story, some of them have also seen improvements in their skin conditions.

"Seven have told me their problems are still persisting, but the other five to some varying degrees have seen their condition clear up," said Falla. "Two have seen their conditions completely clear up, while three have partially cleared up."

One of those people who have also experienced an improvement in their symptoms was Paul Forster. When the Chronicle last talked to him in March he had already done what local health officials suggested and upgraded his water softener system, because of the particularly hard water found in the area, but his skin condition hadn't cleared up. In fact it only got better when he went away on vacation and was no longer in contact with the local water supply.

Since then he said he's had a 90 per cent improvement in his eczema-like condition, and rarely has to use the cream his doctor prescribed for him.

"I have used so little of it lately, it's been really good," said Forster. "It's been quite a big improvement I would say."

He said he hasn't done anything different in the last little while that would have led to the change. It's only when he heard that the fluoridation in Waterloo's water had been off that he suspected that might be a factor.

"I don't know if I could put two and two together or not, but it's been months since it has been a real problem," said Forster. "And it seems to coincide to when they quit using the fluoride."

Falla said it's led him to a few conclusions. "There are so many chemicals that are in

the water, and people are not all the same, everybody reacts differently," said Falla. "People are affected by the chemicals to the different degrees, you can't pigeonhole everybody in the same box here.

"But I think the fluoride in addition to the chloramine just complicates things even more for people with skin sensitivity like myself."



Waterloo resident Robert Falla, and others, are wondering if their skin conditions, which they attribute to the local water supply, are clearing up due to the lack of fluoride in the water.

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