

## Is Bottled Water the Right Choice?

Bottled water has become a multi-billion-dollar business. It's now the fastest growing segment of the entire beverage industry and the most profitable of all beverages.

It is also one of the biggest polluting industries in the U.S. Over 60,000,000 plastic bottles are produced, transported and disposed of EVERY DAY in the U.S. alone! San Francisco, Los Angeles, Phoenix, Chicago, and many more have recently jumped on the "ban bottled water" wagon making it illegal to spend city dollars on bottled water due to its very harmful environmental impact. Chicago has recently implemented a 5 cent per bottle tax to discourage use by consumers.

The realization that bottled water is seldom of higher quality than tap water has caused a major shift in public opinion. "It causes millions of plastic bottles to be manufactured, transported and then disposed of in U.S. landfills, it's killing our planet, and for no good reason..." Eric Olsen, Natural Resources Defense Council.

Billions of dollars are spent on advertising campaigns to give consumers the perception that bottled water comes from pristine mountain springs or pure underground aquifers. The truth is that bottled water is often little more than tap water in a bottle.

### **THERE ARE NO GOVERNMENT STANDARDS THAT REQUIRE BOTTLED WATER TO BE ANY BETTER, PURER OR SAFER THAN TAP WATER.**

Consider the following from a July 2009 Reuters news article:

"Of particular note, FDA does not have the specific statutory authority to require bottlers to use certified laboratories for water quality tests or to report test results, even if violations of the standards are found," the GAO [General Accountability Office] report reads.

"Americans are willing to pay top dollar for bottled water, which costs up to 1,900 times more than tap water and uses up to 2,000 times more energy to produce and deliver... Over the past several years, however, bottled water has been recalled due to contamination by arsenic, bromate, cleaning compounds, mold, and bacteria. In April, a dozen students at a California junior high school reportedly were sickened after drinking bottled water from a vending machine."

Most bottled water is bottled and sold within the same state to avoid federal regulations. There are no assurances or government requirements that bottled water be of any higher quality than tap water.

In March of 1999, the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) released a report called "[Bottled Water, Pure Drink or Pure Hype?](#)" This report points out that that 60% to 70% of all bottled water is completely exempt from the FDA's bottled water standards, because it is bottled and sold within the same state. **Unless the water is transported across state lines, there are no federal regulations that govern its quality!**

### **Here are some quotes from the NRDC report:**

- City tap water can have no confirmed E-coli or fecal coliform bacteria. FDA bottled water rules include no such prohibition (a certain amount of any type of coliform bacteria is allowed in bottled water).
- City tap water, from surface water, must be filtered and disinfected. In contrast, there are no federal filtration or disinfection requirements for bottled water.
- Most cities using surface water have had to test for Cryptosporidium or Giardia, two common water pathogens, that can cause diarrhea and other intestinal problems, yet bottled water companies do not have to do this.
- City tap water must meet standards for certain important toxic or cancer-causing chemicals, such as phthalate (a chemical that can leach from plastic, including plastic bottles); some in the industry persuaded the FDA to exempt bottled water from the regulations regarding these chemicals.

**The Natural Resources Defense Council report concluded that, "therefore, while much tap water is indeed risky, having compared available data, we conclude that there is no assurance that bottled water is any safer than tap water."**

The reality of bottled water is that you pay from \$1 to \$4 a gallon for the perception of higher quality, when in fact the quality of bottled water is at best an unknown. Quality home water treatment is by far the most economical, the most convenient and the best way to produce truly healthy, great-tasting water. It is also the right choice environmentally!

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