

## **Bottled Water vs. Tap Water**

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Bottled water vs. tap water—which is preferred most? Bottled water was introduced to the world as a means of convenience and having a clean source of drinking water. Tap water seems to be becoming obsolete as far as human consumption is concerned. Since there are so many regulations and steps to abide by when bottling water, who knows if it is as clean as companies claim? Filters can also be attached to pitchers and faucets, but there is no guarantee the water they filter is pathogen free. There are many pros and cons about drinking bottled water vs. tap water. With so many rules and regulations to follow, tap water may just be the way to go.

In 1820, Saratoga Springs was the first company to sell water in bottled form. Since then, the bottled water industry has bloomed. More and more people around the world are opting to drink bottled water rather than tap. “In the mid-1990’s, Americans were drinking more than 10 billion liters of bottled water a year” (“Water in a Bottle vs. Tap,” 2009). There still are some who prefer to drink tap water because of the fluoride it provides for children. It is recommended that “children ranging in ages 7 to 16” (Buller, 2002) should have a certain amount of fluoride in their water. There are supplement drops that can be put into bottled water to substitute for the fluoride that is missing, however.

There are guidelines and steps that have to be taken by all companies that manufacture bottled water. These rules are set in place by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Bottled water is regulated by the FDA because it is considered to be a food. The FDA only requires testing of bottled water once a week and that the reports are turned in to be put on record. Reports should be turned in weekly so that the FDA can notify the public if there are any

problems with the water that has been distributed. “The FDA regulates bottled water but only bottled water that is in what we call interstate commerce, that crosses state lines” (Gross, 2010). Tap water is also tested and must abide by guidelines that are set by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) called the Safe Water Act. The EPA requires that big cities test water dozens of times daily, document and report all findings. Rules should be the same, no matter if it is bottled or tap water. Humans are consuming both products; therefore, they should be equal in quality.

Most Americans choose to drink bottled water because of the crisp and clean taste it has. “Bottled water offered an alternative to sugary, carbonated drinks, industry leaders said” (Stafford, 2012). Tap water seems to linger behind on the palate once ingested. Sometimes the presence of chlorine can be detected when drinking tap water. Bottled water companies go through different processes in order to remove the chlorine taste from water and give it the clean taste. What most consumers don’t know is that 90% of the time, bottled water still has all the impurities that tap water contains. It’s just not able to be tasted. Tap water is actually a safer source of drinking water rather than bottled water. With the EPA mandating that testing is done so frequently on tap water, they are notified immediately when something is wrong. “In comparison, bottled water facilities are inspected on average once every 2.5 years” (Markwart, 2012). The FDA rarely receives reports about deficiencies of bottled water that is being manufactured.

Tap water, as well as bottled water, can contain some waterborne diseases. Some of these pathogens can include “cholera, botulism, hepatitis a, dysentery, cryptosporidiosis, polio

and giardia” (“Diseases and Their Pathogens,” n.d.). Botulism is waterborne pathogen that can cause “paralysis” (“Diseases and Their Pathogens,” n.d). All of these diseases can do some harm to the human body. Mostly they occur inside the digestive tract of the body. Dysentery has a gastrointestinal route of exposure. It can cause “severe, often bloody diarrhea, vomiting, fever and is life threatening if left untreated” (“Diseases and Their Pathogens,” n.d). In order to prevent these pathogens from entering the body, bottled water is filtered several times to ensure that nothing is passed through. Although tap water is not filtered, it does get tested daily to ensure no pathogens have entered.

Everyone is familiar with the big bottled water brands like Dasani, Evian, Arctic Spring and Glacier Mountain Natural Spring Water, just to name a few. Not many people know that Glacier Mountain is not from an actual glacier; it is “actually from New Jersey” (Gross, 2010). Arctic Spring does not get its water from the Arctic at all; it comes directly from “Lakeland, Florida” (Gross, 2010) where there certainly is no “Arctic.” Many of the companies print nice pictures on the front of the bottle to paint an imaginary picture of where the water came from, and the name sometimes contributes to the marketing. Just because it has a pretty picture of a spring or mountain in the background, it does not mean that is where it came from.

In 1966, a German company was the first to dream up the idea of a home water filtration system. Now Brita is known world-wide for their systems to purify tap water. “A Brita faucet can be purchased for \$20, and a year’s worth of replacement filters is \$48” (Kelli, 2011). The intent of the filter is to catch all the impurities in a filter that may have passed through the faucet. The filter mounts to kitchen sinks or even a pitcher in the refrigerator. The filter is

supposed to filter out all of the pathogens and the chlorine taste that is left behind by tap water. Even Brita can't issue a 100% guarantee that the water is clean, though. They can only tell what is supposed to come out of the water. "It can improve the water's quality" ("Water Filters," 2010). Once again, another source of clean water comes directly from the tap, the same tap that houses public water fountains in city parks and the same water source that is tested by the EPA daily and not just once a week or once a month.

Most people who drink bottled water do so because of the ease and convenience of getting the water. At any given time a person can stop at the convenience store and pick up a bottle of water as opposed to going home to get water out of the faucet. No one takes the time to ask questions about what it is humans are consuming in bottled water. What really gives it the clean and crisp taste? What is it that companies are doing to water that makes it worth \$2.00 for a 20-oz bottle? Bottled water companies are supposed to abide by the rules of the FDA and report weekly testing results, but it is not getting done. The public should be made aware of any changes or findings to the water that is being sold in stores. Just think what else they could be hiding.

On the other hand, the filters that can be bought in stores are just mounted onto the faucet in homes to filter tap water, the same tap water that is being mandated by the EPA. It requires that public water systems be tested several times daily, and all reports and findings are remanded to them for evaluation. With public water systems being tested daily, the chance of it being the cleaner source is greater than not. Filters can only get out the basics like color,

taste and some pathogens. Remember not everything is leaving that water and becoming trapped inside that small filter.

Bottled water vs. tap water is a very controversial topic. Consumers choose both for justifiable reasons. There are pros as well as cons for them both. Bottled water is quick and convenient for everyone. Brita introduced filters that can be mounted to faucets and pitchers at home to make water taste just the same as the bottle. Keep in mind, however, that tap water is tested several times daily while bottled water just a few times a month. Remember, the next time thirst is calling and the thought of bottled water comes to mind, think “What is really in this water?” When no answers come to mind, tap may be the best way to go.

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