

Water Crisis: Sanitation is a Global Issue

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A renewable resource is one that is replaced by natural resources at a rate that is equal to or faster than its consumption. Water is the building block of all life on Earth, and it covers over seventy percent of the planet's surface. Water's role as a renewable resource is essential to the survival of life (Ramone, 2011). Society should take a look at the importance of water, the severity of water-related diseases, and ways to make water sanitary so that all of mankind can benefit from this life-sustaining asset. "Eight hundred eighty-four million people lack access to safe water supplies" ("Water Facts," 2011). Once everyone becomes aware of the water crisis, everyone should try to find a way to solve this global issue.

Water is very important to both the planet and the human body. "Without water, Earth and its organisms would have burned to death" ("Why Water is Important to Us," 2011). Water absorbs heat during the day and the summer. During the winter and the night, the gradual cooling of water warms up the air. Because of this property, the habitat for marine life remains stable throughout the year ("Why Water is Important to Us," 2011). Water is an essential element of life on Earth: "97% of Earth's water is in oceans and seas, while only two percent is found on the icecaps. Seventy-five percent of the human body consists of water" ("Why Water is Important to Us," 2011). Water carries nutrients to various cells within our body. Water also carries waste out of our body. It is clear that water is valuable to all life as we know it.

Unfortunately, not everyone has access to sanitary water, and because of this, there are several diseases associated with unsanitary water. There are four classes of water-related diseases. Water-borne diseases are caused by consuming water with

animal or human feces. Water-washed diseases are caused by using contaminated water on the skin. Water-based diseases are caused by parasites found in animals that live in contaminated water. Water-related diseases are caused by insects that breed in water (Gleick, 2002, 1-3). It is tragic that “Over three million people die each year from water-related diseases” (“Water Facts,” 2011). Water-related diseases are very severe and can be life threatening.

There are several ways to make water sanitary. The most common way is to use a water filter. Water filters are designed to remove disease-causing organisms from water. However, filter mechanisms can become clogged with debris, causing the filter to become unreliable. Another downfall is when the temperature gets below freezing, this causes working parts of the filter to clog with ice. Another way to sanitize water is by chemical treatment. Chlorine bleach and iodine can sometimes kill disease-organisms. In order to use this method, people must have knowledge of the chemical components in these chemicals. The chemicals have to balance out according to the contamination level of the water, the temperature of the water, and the number of particles within the water. If someone does not balance it properly, the chemical used in treating the water can become a health hazard. The newest method to sanitize water is solar water disinfection. In order for this method to be effective, plastic PET (polyethylene terephthalate—a type of recycled plastic) bottles have to be used, and the intensity of the sun’s rays have to be high enough. This method usually requires lab analysis, thus making it extremely difficult for people to use. The best way to make water safe is boiling it. As long as the water reaches its boiling point, disease-carrying

organisms are destroyed. According an article on survival techniques, making water safe can be as complex as synthesizing chemical components or as simple as starting a fire and letting it reach its boiling point (“The Best Way to Make Water Safe to Drink,” 2011).

All of society should try to make sure everyone realizes the importance of water as a vital resource. After everyone takes a look at the importance of water, the severity of water-related diseases, and ways to make water sanitary, everyone should feel compelled to do something about this global crisis. Since this renewable resource is essential to the survival of life, keeping water sanitary should be everyone’s responsibility.

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