Title:
Drinking Water: Which Is Best?

Word Count:
790

Summary:
Water, if it is to be considered drinking water, must be consumable by humans without causing illness or disease. Drinking water must be potable, that is, it must be clean, or drinkable. All life forms on earth require drinking water. Humans, in particular, require at least 64 fluid ounces, or 8 cups, of drinking water each day for optimal health.

Your drinking water, in the United States, may come from one of several sources.

A Public Drinking Water System

The term ...

Keywords:
drinking water,tap water,bottled drinking water,public water system,purified drinking water

Article Body:
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A Public Drinking Water System

The term “public water system” usually refers to any water system that has 15 or more hook-ups, or serves 25 or more people. Water systems that serve less than this are considered private water systems. Public water systems may be run by cities or towns, by state or federal agencies, by other political subdivisions like water districts and co-ops, or by private, for-profit companies. Regardless of who owns and runs the public drinking water system, that system must comply with all requirements of the Safe Drinking Water Act.

A Private Drinking Water System?

The term “private water system” usually refers to any water system that serves between 1 and 14 service connections. A private drinking water system is not regulated by the government. However, owners of private wells and these non-regulated systems often have resources available to them.

What Is Done to Keep Our Water Clean?

Government laws are designed to keep our water clean. But do they work?

According to a national inventory by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), rivers and streams with water quality rated “good” fell from 65 percent in 1998 to 61 percent in 2000. Estuaries with water quality rated "good" fell from 56 percent to 49 percent over the same two-year period.

In a report, the EPA explained: "Wastewater treatment efficiencies may be leveling off, which, when combined with population and economic growth, could have the effect of reversing hard-won water quality gains. By 2016, pollution levels could be similar to levels observed in the mid-1970s."

What Is Done to Keep Our Drinking Water Clean?

Such reports are not concerned with the drinking water that comes out of the tap in your kitchen or bathroom. Is our drinking water clean?

We should not take for granted tap water purity. A study of drinking water systems of 19 U.S. cities found that many cities rely on drinking water delivery systems and treatments that date back to before World War I. Those aging pipes will break sometime. When they do, they might leach contaminants into the drinking water they carry. Those old-fashioned water treatment plants were built to filter out particles in the water, and to kill some of the parasites and bacteria, but many fail to remove modern contaminants.

More positively, many U.S. cities have updated their systems. They provide good drinking water because they:

- Guard the sources of their water (lakes, streams, reservoirs, and wells) against pollution
- Provide good quality pipes, and keep them maintained at all times
- Have modern treatment facilities that are large enough and high-tech enough to keep our drinking water clean.

The Safe Drinking Water Act, a national law safeguarding tap water in the U.S.,

oversees local government provisions for your drinking water.

Bottled Drinking Water

If you are concerned about your drinking water, you may decide to purchase bottled water. U.S. citizens spend billions of dollars each year on bottled drinking water. Some use it in place of other beverages. Others use bottled drinking water because they like its taste or think it is safer than tap water.

Bottled drinking water comes from sources similar to those of tap water. It comes from rivers and lakes, or from underground aquifers. Bottled drinking water's taste and quality varies among brands. It can even vary within the same brand, depending on the source of a particular bottle. Even bottled drinking water may contain at least small amounts of contaminants. It may meet USFDA standards, but those standards do not demand total purity.

Purified Drinking Water

Finally, you may choose to purify your water through one of many available filtering systems. Purification systems may be as simple as a pitcher that is filled with water, and dispenses it through a filter. You may attach a filter to the faucet in your kitchen, or to the water line beneath the kitchen sink. You might get your purified drinking water from a carbon filtration system, or you might invest in a reverse osmosis system.

Purified drinking water is more costly, per gallon, than tap water, but it may provide the peace of mind and/or the health you want.

Drinking water, if it is to be considered drinking water, must be consumable by humans without causing illness or disease. The challenge may be less or greater where you live, but it is worth meeting.