

Green Irene Guide to Water Purity



Have you been anywhere lately where they are NOT telling you to drink more water? Your doctor, trainer and weight loss program are all preaching water, water and more water. 70% of the human body is composed of H₂O. It is a logical conclusion that what ever is in our drinking water will have enormous impact on our bodies. Green Irene knows that you want to put “high quality H₂O” in (and on) your body and your family’s. So, pour yourself a nice big glass of ice water and look at the options.

Drinking Water Comes From Where?

Drinking water comes from two sources in this country, unless it is shipped over from Fiji in a bottle. It is taken from above surface sources, such as rivers and lakes. Or, it is taken from below ground sources such as aquifers and wells. Traditionally, it has been believed that below ground sources were cleaner as they were further from pollution sources. That may still be true, but we are putting some pretty toxic stuff out there that seeps below ground with ease.

What Goes Into Our Drinking and Bath Water Supply

Think for a moment about what we put into our nation’s biggest rivers and community water sources. Chemical factories, metal manufacturing plants, plastic and fertilizer factories, and any other type of factory you can imagine, discharge into rivers. Industrial feedlots and processing plants discharge into rivers. Fertilizer and pesticides from our nations farms all runoff into rivers. Sewage sludge and effluent, which are the cleaned up contents of our toilet flushes, are discharged into rivers. These discharges are all “closely monitored and regulated” by the Environmental Protection Agency but delegated to states, and then to municipalities, to enforce. Thinking about the soup these discharges create is enough to make you gag. Especially when you envision turning it back into drinking water.

EPA Drinking Water Standards

The EPA sets standards for ninety drinking water contaminants. These “primary standards” cover organic and inorganic chemicals, microorganisms, disinfection byproducts and radioactive particles. Some microorganisms found in water supplies make humans very sick such as cryptosporidium, giardia and coliform from feces and soil runoff. Inorganic chemicals such as arsenic, asbestos, cyanide and lead obviously aren’t good. Neither are radioactive particles or too much chlorine. These are all regulated by the EPA “primary standards”. There are also “secondary standards” based on aesthetic characteristics such as taste, smell and appearance. These are the things that really make us turn up our nose, such as cloudiness or a chlorine smell. These secondary standards are merely “recommendations” to water suppliers and are not mandatory or enforceable.

What’s Coming Out of Your Tap?

The best way to learn more about tap water in your community is to read your water supplier’s annual water quality report. Public water suppliers are required to provide consumer confidence reports (CCR) to their customers. These reports are also known as annual water quality reports or drinking water quality reports. The CCR summarizes information regarding sources used (i.e., rivers,

lakes, reservoirs, or aquifers) any detected contaminants, compliance and educational information. The reports are due to customers by July 1st of each year. The EPA web site is the place to look for more information on your local tap water.

<http://www.epa.gov/safewater/dwinfo/index.html>

Are Your Children Drinking Anti-Depressants?

As if the other stuff wasn't enough, a growing concern is the amount of drug residue going into our public water supplies. Prescription and over the counter drugs are flushed down the toilet in homes and hospitals. Veterinary drugs such as antibiotics and steroids hit the water supply from meat and poultry operations and feed lots. Our sewage systems are not equipped for pharmaceutical removal. These residues do not dissolve and they do not evaporate. They accumulate in the water system and are coming back to us through our taps. The EPA does not currently have standards for pharmaceuticals, and water utilities are not required to test for these chemicals. Pharmaceutical residues have been found in TREATED tap water supplies in 24 major metropolitan areas around the U.S.

Is Bottled Drinking Water Safer? Not Necessarily...

Americans have become accustomed to a bottle of drinking water in every hand we see. It is convenient, portable and perceived by many to be a safer alternative to tap water. Bottled water is regulated by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. The FDA standards are based on the EPA standards for tap water. The standards for bottled water have no higher threshold than the tap water standards. Keep in mind the pharmaceuticals. As there is no EPA standard for them, there is no FDA standard for them. Bottled water does not alleviate the pharmaceutical concern. 25% of bottled water is actually just tap water. There are no assurances that water coming out of many bottles is any cleaner or safer than water from American taps.

I stuffed my diaper bag and gym bag with bottles of water for years. Recently, however, I started to wonder where all those bottles go. As it turns out, Americans send 30 million plastic water bottles to landfills every single day. It takes pretty much



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FOREVER for a petroleum based water bottle to degrade in the landfill. Essentially all water bottles could be recycled but only 20% currently are.

The Real Cost of a Bottle of Water

Economically, bottled water can be up to 10,000 times more expensive than its equivalent from the tap. There are many concerns about the environmental costs of manufacturing, storing and transporting bottled water. Most plastics are petroleum products. Making water bottles puts millions of tons of CO2 into the atmosphere (think Greenhouse Gases). Once the bottle is created and filled with water, large amounts of fossil fuel are expended in delivery. Some bottled water is transported long distances by ship or airplane in addition to the distances it travels by truck or rail. It takes a fair amount of energy to move a plastic bottle from where it is made, to where it is filled, then to the store, and finally into the consumer's hand. Talk about your carbon footprint!

So, What Can I Do to Protect my Family?

It is not just the water you drink that impacts your health. Skin is the human body's largest organ and absorption is something it does very well. Chlorine, and other nasty chemicals in the water supply, are absorbed by your skin when you take a shower or a bath. You are familiar with the resulting itchy skin and dry hair. The same mix of chemicals go into a mist form in your shower and can cause eye irritation, lung and sinus irritation. These impacts are multiplied tenfold by the sensitive skin, eyes and lungs of your little ones. Your Green Irene Eco-Consultant can sell you an easily installed filtering shower head and a filtering attachment for your bathtub. You, and your baby, no longer have to sit in the tub soaking chemicals into your body.

The first step to having the cleanest possible water in your home is to consider a home water filtration system. Your Green Irene Eco-Consultant can describe the different filtration options for you. Filters will address both the water that goes in your body and the water you use on your body. The two most common and practical types of water filter systems on the market today are carbon filters and reverse osmosis systems.

Activated carbon filter devices use carbon filter cartridges to absorb a variety of substances, including chlorine, pathogenic organisms and chlorine byproducts. Carbon filter units are available for your faucets, and in-line for your refrigerator water and icemaker.

Reverse osmosis water filtration systems will remove a more diverse list of contaminants than carbon filter systems - such as nitrates, sodium and other dissolved compounds. These systems are more costly because they require in-line installation and a pre-filter to remove dirt and sediment. Reverse osmosis provides an extremely high level of filtering and is available for filtering water throughout your whole home. Whole house water treatment systems can be expensive and may be more than is required. Consider having samples of your indoor water tested at a certified lab to help you decide if more aggressive measures might be warranted. If so, let your Green Irene Eco-Consultant direct you toward a plumbing professional in your area to advise you and install the appropriate home filtering system.

Drink Up

Let your Green Irene Eco-Consultant help you analyze the water filtering options for your home. Your tap water, bath and shower water can all be easily filtered. You can't just put the filters on and forget about them, however. You need to follow the manufacturer's instructions as to cleaning and maintenance or the filters will not remain effective. For the convenience of bottled water, fill up a reusable bottle as you leave the house. You will save money using a home filtration system versus bottled water. A high-end faucet filter system provides water for 18 cents a gallon opposed to \$1, or more, a gallon for bottled water. Your Eco-Consultant can steer you toward cool stainless steel bottles that will keep your water cold, not taste like plastic, and let the world know you are conscious of the environment.

Don't forget that your body is composed of 70% water. Now that you are aware and informed, you can take the necessary steps to make your family's water as pure as it can be.

Featuring our Green Home and Office Makeovers, GO GREEN Workshops and over 100 of the best green products available. Your local Green Irene will be there to be that Green Friend you wish you had, and can give you the advice you need to move your family toward a more healthy, green, low-impact lifestyle.

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