

Clean safe water is the true staff of life

Written by Janice Nath
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Push aside bread, water is the true "staff of life." Water, which carries oxygen to our body's cells, makes up more than half of our body weight and we can't live for more than a few days without it. While our bodies don't get water just from drinking water alone as any fluids we drink contain water as well as certain foods (think juicy peaches or ripe tomatoes), consuming pure, fresh, clean water is vital for our good health. How can we ensure that our drinking water is safe? In America, we have scientists and government regulators committed to detecting, observing and regulating potential contaminants in our water. However, the toll of time can result in a system that may wear out as well as inadvertent mistakes that can happen. When the system breaks down, we run the risk of toxic chemicals that can find their way into the ground's surface and into our tap water. To ensure our best health, we do need to find out if there are any contaminants in our water and what their concentration levels are and if they are contaminants that potentially pose health risks.

The United States Environmental Protection Agency, <http://water.epa.gov/drink/index.cfm>, is a great resource to learn more about the safety of the ground water and drinking water in your region.

Central North Pacific Ocean's Pacific Trash Vortex, also known as the Great Pacific Garbage Patch, hosts plastics, sludge and other debris trapped by currents. The vulnerability of the world's water to contamination and pollution is part of our 21st century reality and we must all play the first line of defense in ensuring our water is clean and contaminant free. As a working mother and a concerned San Diego citizen, here are my tips on health and drinking water safety:

Avoid Plastic Water Bottles - Besides taking a toll on the environment by adding to our landfills, the plastic from plastic water bottles, particularly when warmed up, can leak into our drinking water. A study published in the "Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry" by Dr. X.L. Cao noted "significant migration of BPA, or bisphenol-A, especially in hot conditions."

Ditch the Office Water Cooler – In addition to the physical strength needed to hoist up a new water cooler bottle into the tank, there is also a major health hazard for offices that fail to regularly clean and disinfect the tank. A Tufts University research study on water coolers found that, "organisms from each new bottle of water adhere to a cooler's reservoir--the 'well' in which

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the bottle sits – and also to its hot and cold water spigots, accumulating over time and thereby boosting the bacterial count of any water that passes through on the way to a cup or glass."

Investigate Faucet Filters – If the tap water doesn't taste appealing and there are concerns about heavy metals, chlorine or other contaminants in the water supply, water filters used in a pitcher or attached to the faucet can be a viable option. Not every filter type eliminates every type of contaminant. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) requires that community water systems provide customers with an annual water quality report. These Consumer Confidence Reports provide information about the quality of the drinking water supply. Once your review this report, you can assess what contaminants may be in play and which filter works best to address it.

The City of San Diego issues a Drinking Water Quality Report every year on July 1st. This report, which generally arrives with your water invoice, includes important information about the water we drink. For San Diego and other cities nationwide, you can also request a copy of your area water quality report from your water company or visit the Environmental Protection Agency at www.epa.gov. Invest in a testing kit and test your water both at home and in the office. These samples can be submitted to laboratories for analysis. The safety of our drinking water should never be taken for granted and we should do everything we can to ensure our liquid "staff of life" is clean and fresh from bio-contaminants.

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