
Your Guide to Safe Water

Provided by Kimberly Dalzell, PhD, RD, LD, Program Director, Holistic Nutrition Services
Author of *Challenge Cancer and Win! Step-by-step nutrition action plans for your specific cancer*

For more information: www.challengecancer.com

Water from the tap not only tastes bad, it's filled with synthetic chemicals that, in large enough doses over time, can cause cancer, birth defects and nerve toxicity. Because it is important to drink at least 64 ounces of purified water per day, you may want to purchase bottled water or a treatment unit for your home.

How do you know if the bottled water you buy is any good? You don't. There is nothing to prevent bottlers from bottling and selling plain old tap water. Look on the label to see if the bottler has an independent laboratory run contaminant testing on their product. Rather than spring water, choose water treated by reverse osmosis or the distillation process. If you do purchase bottled water, choose glass, not plastic, containers.

If you are going to treat your drinking water with a home unit, have your water tested prior to choosing a specific treatment because none of the purifiers act on the entire spectrum of contaminants. Remember that water softeners remove small amounts of iron and some minerals, but not organic or bacterial contaminants.

Activated carbon filters are the most popular and the least expensive type of purifier. The filters will remove pesticides, herbicides, radon and chlorine. Many objectionable odors and tastes will also be removed, but nitrates and sulfates are not removed. Be aware that carbon filters can trap organic materials and provide a feast for bacteria, causing bacterial overgrowth in the unit. Tests have shown that block and granular filters are a bit more effective than granulated filters. In an effort to prevent freeing trapped chemicals, never filter hot water. Change your filters often.

Distilled water (yes, the kind of water you put in your iron!) provides the best, high quality, pure water but can taste flat. Home distillation units cost around \$200 to \$500 and have a capacity of two to five gallons per day. Avoid stainless steel distillation units as they are a potential source of aluminum.

Reverse osmosis treated water is the next best choice, costing around \$500 to \$1200 per under-the-sink unit. About 90% of minerals and biological contaminants are removed in this process. Add a carbon filter to improve the quality of your treated water even more. Contact your local water company to determine what home units are available to install or rent.

If you are unable to use one of the above methods for water purification, at least reduce your risk of lead contamination by letting the water run from the tap for a few minutes first thing in the morning and letting the water get as cold as possible. Never use water from the hot tap for cooking or drinking, or making baby formula. If your plumbing needs repair, ask that lead-free pipes and materials be used.

If you would like more information on water quality, contact the following resources:

Clean Water Action	(202)895-0420
National Sanitation Foundation	(800)673-8010
Water Quality Association	(800)749-0234