

Is the tap water in in your area safe?

Written by PHILIP S. CHUA, M.D., FACS, FPCS
Monday, 21 November 2016 20:03



THE human body is about 50 to 75 percent water.

An average adult has about 55 to 60 percent (man, 60 percent, and women, 55 percent) while an infant is typically between 75-78 percent, dropping to 65 percent by age 12 months.

In general, almost all of us cannot survive beyond five days totally without water.

Life without water is not possible.

How much water do we need?

The U.S. Institute of Medicine's Food and Nutrition Board recommends 91 ounces (about 2,730 cc or about 11 8-oz glasses) for women, and 125 ounces (about 3,750 cc or about 15 8-oz glasses) for men per day.

The popular recommendation of eight 8-ounce glasses per day is only about 1,920 cc.

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We should at least drink this much, unless instructed otherwise for medical reason.

It is best for our body to be adequately hydrated, even for our skin.

As poet W. H. Auden said, "Thousands have lived without love, not one without water."

How safe is tap water?

Tap water in the United States and in major cities in the Philippines and in many other countries, which is strictly regulated and monitored by the government, is generally safe.

Exception to this is during natural or man-made calamities where water could be contaminated.

Since I carry a TDS (total dissolved solid water tester) when I travel, I was pleasantly surprised to find that tap water in Cebu, Manila and Quezon City all have a lower TDS reading (which means less total dissolved solids, less mineral contamination, excellent city water regulation, filtration and monitoring) than tap water in Las Vegas, Northwest Indiana and Chicago, which were (are) well within the U.S. water quality and safety standard.

Caution: The TDS meter does not test for bacterial, fungal, or viral contamination.

Should the TDS reading be zero?

No.

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When the TDS reads “zero,” the liquid is distilled water, where there is no mineral residues at all.

Distillation is the process (not reverse osmosis filtration) used to produce distilled water.

Three brands of distilled water in the Philippines I know are Absolute, Wilkins and SM distilled water.

In the United States, there are various brands of distilled water.

Distilled water is used in medicine and in some devices like iron, steamer, humidifier, CPAP machines, etc.

What are the usual water contaminants?

There are three categories of these contaminants: Inorganic (minerals, which may affect taste of water); Organic (from decaying plants, dirt, sediments, bacteria, amoeba and protozoa); and Synthetic (urban, agricultural and industrial pollutants, such as PCB, DBCP, TCE and others, as well as chlorine and its by-products, all of which contaminants could cause health problems).

Unfiltered water has heavy metals such as mercury, arsenic, cadmium and lead in it.

The sources of these pollutants are industrial chemicals and wastes.

These are dumped to the rivers and lakes every minute of the day, poisoning our water supplies and environment.

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Is distilled water healthier to drink?

Not really.

Drinking distilled water is safe for occasional consumption.

Distillation removes minerals, including fluoride, which we need for our teeth.

Tap water in major cities, filtered/purified spring water, or bottled water filtered by reverse osmosis with UV light exposure, are safe and healthy, healthier to drink long term than distilled water.

Tap water is now being served in many restaurants.

Bottled water costs about 500 to 1,000 times more (but not any better) than government regulated tap water.

Are all bottled water safe?

No.

There was a research which questions the safety of some bottled water.

A study by Dutch researchers on samples from bottled mineral water from 16 countries (not including the United States) “showed evidence of contamination with either bacteria or fungi in 40% of them.”

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Of the 68 samples, 21 grew bacteria (including legionella, the cause of Legionnaire's pneumonia) in laboratory cultures, and 4% grew fungi.

Done at the University Medical Center Nijmegen in the Netherlands, the study analyzed properly-sealed bottled water "from nine European countries and seven others, including Canada, Australia and Mexico."

The sales of bottled water in the United States tripled to about \$4 billion a year the past decades.

The U.S. Environmental Working Group (thru Yahoo Green) gave the highest rating for safety to Gerber Pure Purified water, Nestle's Pure Life water, and Penta Ultra Purified water.

During the same periods there were recalls of bottled water (other than those brands above) for E. coli contamination, the latest one was June 2016 involving two Pennsylvania Niagara Bottling plants, whose spring water source was contaminated.

The public must also be aware that tap water could be bottled directly from the faucet, sealed and sold as "purified bottled water."

On ecology: A single half-liter plastic bottle leaves a hefty carbon footprint of about 82.89 of CO₂.

There are about 50 billion plastic bottled water consumed around the world each year.

This does not include the billions of other plastic materials littering the globe, ever-present for hundreds of years, choking our environment in more ways than one.

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Thirty to forty percent of bottling companies are using tap water as their source.

Among them are the popular brands Aquafina and Dasani.

Studies show that, in general, government strictly regulated and monitored city tap water is safe to drink, and also “free.”

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