

# Tap Water vs Bottled Water

Choosing between tap and bottled water is ultimately a personal decision. You may not want to base your decision only on the taste.

Bottled water is not necessarily cleaner or safer than most tap water in the United States. That is the conclusion of "Bottled Water: Pure Drink or Pure Hype"- the Natural Resources Defense Council's new study on contaminants in bottled water. While most bottled water is okay, says NDRC attorney Eric Olson, some brands may present threats to vulnerable subpopulations because they contain microbial contaminants. According to the report, bottled water consumption has tripled in ten years, with sales reaching \$4 billion annually. Yet, bottled water is required to meet standards that are different than those for tap water.

Bottled water quality is regulated by the U. S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), while drinking water systems follow State and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) regulations. Carbonated water is exempt from bottled water standards, says the report. Instead, it is regulated under general sanitation rules.

| <b>Tap Water<br/>Regulated by EPA</b>                              | <b>Bottled Water<br/>Regulated by FDA</b>                  |
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| Cannot have confirmed E. coli or fecal Coliform bacteria.          | A certain amount of any bacteria is allowed.               |
| Filtered and/or disinfected  | No federal filtration or disinfection requirements.        |
| Violation of drinking water standards are grounds for enforcement. | Bottled water in violation of standards can still be sold. |
| Utilities must have their water tested by certified labs.          | Such testing is not required for bottlers.                 |
| Tap water results must be reported to state or federal officials.  | There are no reporting requirements for bottlers.          |

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| Water system operators must be certified.                           | Bottled water plant operators do not have to be certified.   |
| Water suppliers must issue consumer confidence reports annually.    | There are no public right-to-know requirements for bottlers. |
| Costs pennies a day   | Costs \$.80 to \$4.00 per gallon.                            |
| Contains essential nutrients for the body such as calcium and iron. | Natural minerals are removed by filtration.                  |
| Chlorine residual in water to prevent bacteria growth.              | No disinfectant present to kill bacteria in bottles.         |

We suggest that you take an empty water bottle or your favorite sports bottle, rinse it thoroughly and fill it with tap water. If you object to the chlorine taste, just keep the bottle in the refrigerator for at least 8 hours. The chlorine taste will dissipate.