



Simply Green

Live Well, Tread Gently

Spring 2011 Issue: RE-THINK THE BOTTLE...

The SCA's Planet Manhasset committee presents occasional eco-tip sheets, offering easy-to-implement ideas in support of a greener and healthier lifestyle. The committee invites you to share your own green tips. Contact us at PlanetManhasset@yahoo.com

Instead of buying bottled water, drink filtered tap water from stainless steel bottles. You'll save money, drink water that's better regulated, and decrease the number of plastic bottles that floods our landfills and oceans!!

There is no question that drinking water is essential to good health. 50 billion bottles of water are consumed annually in just the U.S. alone! But bottled water costs more than 2,000 times as much as tap water and nearly 80% of the bottles are not recycled. Is it really our best option?

Buying bottled water is convenient, accessible and, according to marketing claims, is pure, clean and natural. However, many of the marketing claims are exaggerated or simply untrue, according to the [Environmental Working Group](#) (EWG), a Washington D.C.-based research and advocacy group.

As consumers, we would expect to know exactly what is inside that plastic bottle. But it may surprise you to know that most bottle makers won't divulge some basic facts regarding what is in their water. These include: Where does the water come from--natural spring or municipal tap supply? Is it purified? If so, how, and has it been tested for contaminants? There is also the issue of expiration dates. Some water bottles may remain on shelves or in warehouses for years after first being bottled.

Among the ten best-selling brands, nine won't answer some or all of these questions. The industry's lack of transparency is surprising. Overall, 18% of bottled waters fail to list the location of their source, and 32% disclose nothing about the treatment or purity of the water. The EWG's Bottled Water Scorecard (ewg.org) can help you find brands that disclose the water's source location and treatment methods. There is also a National Drinking Water Database that lists information on the quality of local municipalities' tap water (Manhasset's water complies with all regulated standards) and

EWG also provides comprehensive information on the best methods to filter your tap water at home.

In the United States, bottled water and tap water are regulated by different federal agencies: the [Food and Drug Administration](#) (FDA) regulates bottled water and the [Environmental Protection Agency](#) (EPA) regulates the quality of tap water. Under the [Safe Drinking Water Act](#), the EPA has set maximum contaminant levels for approximately 90 contaminants that might be found in drinking water and 15 secondary maximum contaminant levels. Tap water contamination incidents must be reported promptly to the public; the same isn't true for bottled water. And although contamination of bottled water does occur, many instances have never received public notice.

Bottled water sold in plastic containers can be tainted with estrogenic chemicals. These chemicals mimic human hormones and have been implicated in increased cancer risk. Researchers believe some of this type of contamination may be due to the plastic container itself. PET (Polyethylene terephthalate) is commonly used in the production of single-use plastic water bottles and is believed to be the main contributor to this chemical contamination. It is believed that exposure to very high or low temperatures may cause leaching of chemicals from the plastic bottle into the water. Unfortunately there is no way for consumers to monitor the conditions through which bottled water is stored and transported.

In addition to concerns regarding sourcing, contamination, storage and transportation, bottled water also impacts the environment negatively. Plastic water bottles require a significant amount of energy to produce and transport. In the United States, creating plastic water bottles uses an estimated 17 million barrels of oil annually – enough to fuel 1.3 million cars for a year! And while PET plastic is considered to be recyclable, only a fraction of these bottles are in fact recycled, leaving as many as 80% of them polluting our landfills and poisoning our oceans and marine life.

While it is certainly impossible to avoid bottled water altogether, Planet Manhasset recommends drinking our local filtered tap water, preferably stored in 18/8 Food Grade stainless steel bottles. Or try to buy brands that tell you what's in the water and that use advanced treatment technologies like reverse osmosis and micro-filtration.

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