WATER AND BETTER BEVERAGES

We are bombarded with messages about the safety and purity of the water we drink. Do we drink purified water? Spring water? Water from the tap?

WHICH WATER IS **THE MOST HEALTHY TO DRINK?**

The bottom line is that we need water. Our bodies are at least 60% water. "It is the primary component of all the bodily fluids – blood, lymph, digestive juices, urine, tears, and sweat. Water is involved in almost every bodily function: circulation, digestion, absorption, and elimination of wastes, to name a few. Water carries the electrolytes and mineral salts that help convey electrical currents in the body. Water requirements vary greatly from person to person. The climate in which we live, our activity level, and our diet all influence our need for water."[1]

Water isn't just liquid to drink. Water provides us with minerals and trace minerals that are absolutely necessary for life. So, when we are choosing which water to drink, we need to think about how we are going to get the water with the most natural balance of minerals. We also need to consider whether our water has been contaminated with unwanted organisms, or if the water has been treated with chemicals that could compromise the balance of minerals.

Most tap water in the U.S. today is treated with chemicals, such as chlorine, phosphates, and other chemicals, to clear out unwanted organisms to make it safe for human consumption. The only problem is that air pollutants and other contaminants may not be filtered out of the water.

There are so many things that can contaminate our water supply: fertilizers, pesticides, animal waste products, and now even pharmaceutical medications. In March, 2008, the *Washington Post* reported on a study done on the water supply in Arlington, Virginia, by the U.S. Geological Survey and the U.S. Department of Agriculture. That study found small concentrations of pharmaceutical medications

— in the water. The article goes on to state that in another research study, “Pharmaceuticals, along with trace amounts of caffeine, were found in the drinking water supplies of 24 of 28 U.S. metropolitan areas tested.”[2] This was the first federal research on contaminants in water supplies throughout the U.S., and what an eye opener for the scientists!

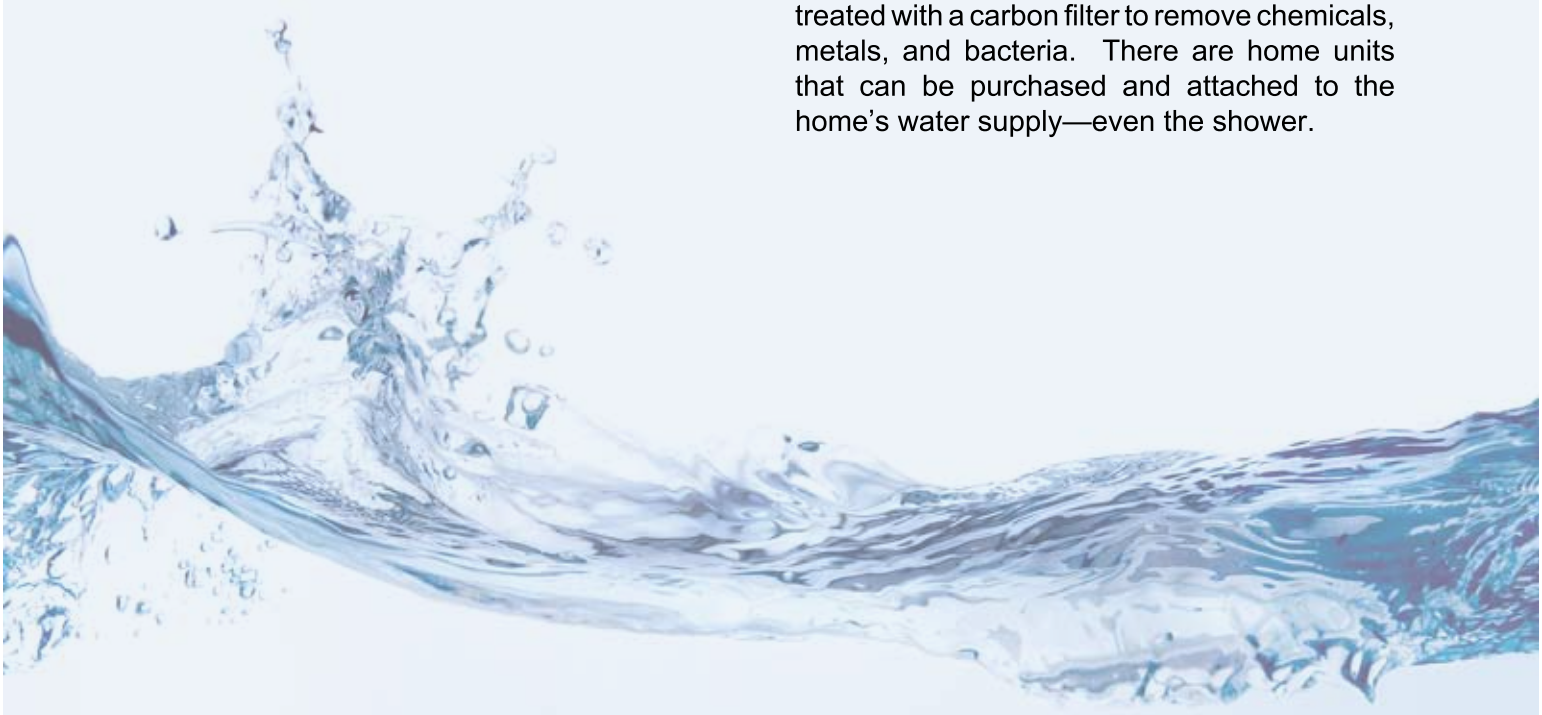
Is it any wonder that we need to be concerned about what type of water we choose to drink?

What about well water? Even well water is becoming less safe because it comes from groundwater supplies. It can vary in mineral content and can contain heavy metals, insecticides, agricultural wastes, and even gasoline by-products. If we are drinking well water, then it should be tested for mineral content as well as contaminants. To learn more about testing your well water, contact your state’s Public Health Department for more information.

Spring water, anyone? Or mineral water? You can’t walk into any grocery store and not see rows upon rows of spring water. This is the “natural” water found in underground springs, but near to the surface of the earth. This water may be disinfected with chlorine, but otherwise is not processed. Also, different parts of the country have different amounts of minerals in their underground springs. Water from the Midwest has the highest mineral content. Most of the spring water is bottled in plastic bottles that have come under scrutiny as of late for being carcinogenic, which can lead to more serious health issues. Of course, it would be ideal to drink spring water from glass bottles —that is, if these can be found.

Mineral water, on the other hand, is spring water that is found deeper in the earth in underground pools. Even though the water is naturally “bubbly,” carbon dioxide is added to make it carbonated. Make certain that the water has been checked for contamination.[3]

What is filtered water? This water has been treated with a carbon filter to remove chemicals, metals, and bacteria. There are home units that can be purchased and attached to the home’s water supply—even the shower.



To find out which is best, check out the Allergy Buyer's Club online.[4] They rate the various filters and provide information on what works best.

Distilled water—for ironing only? Distilled water is actually tap water that has been boiled until the minerals have been steamed out. It also may be highly filtered to remove all minerals and trace elements. It is great for ironing and for some detoxification programs, but not for everyday use. Remember, we need the minerals that water provides so that we don't get dehydrated.

SOME BETTER BEVERAGE OPTIONS

- **HERBAL TEAS:** Vary the type and limit to 3 cups daily unless otherwise prescribed by your healthcare practitioner.

- **FRESHLY JUICED VEGETABLES AND/OR FRUITS:**

These fall under "carbohydrates" for serving sizes. Be aware that the carbohydrates in fruit and vegetable juices are absorbed much more rapidly and tend to raise insulin levels, triggering fat information. Use in moderation and balance them with sufficient quality sources of protein.

- **NON-DAIRY MILKS:**

Non-dairy milks can be substituted for dairy. They include rice milk, nut milk, coconut milk, and whole grain milk. These can be high in simple carbohydrates, which again tend to trigger rises in insulin. To avoid excess sugars, read the labels for protein and sugar content. Use these beverages in moderation and combine them with protein or a protein powder to balance the carbohydrate content.

- **MILK:**

Whole organic milk contains equal servings of protein and carbohydrates. Keep in mind that

NOT SO BETTER BEVERAGES

DIET SODA

COFFEE

ALCOHOL

many individuals are sensitive or allergic to milk and cow's dairy foods. Goat milk is also a healthy alternative and usually is accepted as better than cow's milk.

NOT SO BETTER BEVERAGES

DIET SODA:

Diet soda contains no nutritional benefits, such as protein, carbs, or fat. Due to its highly acidic, synthetic, and potentially toxic nature, it is not recommended for consumption. The sugar substitute used is usually aspartame, which is a neurotoxin. With its sweet taste, it fools the body into thinking that it is receiving sugar. This creates a rise in insulin, just as if you were consuming sugar.

COFFEE:

Due to the potential presence of rancid oils, pesticide residues, and substances which interfere with an enzyme involved in the conversion of the good fats into their anti-inflammatory form, coffee is not recommended. Coffee acts like a natural diuretic and can deplete your electrolytes. It is also a stimulant that can deplete your blood sugar reserves, leaving you tired and irritable. If you choose to drink it anyway, your best choice would be organic, naturally decaffeinated, and water processed. Drink one cup only on occasion.

ALCOHOL:

Drink only in moderation and consume wine only (the health benefits extend mostly to red wine). Drinking wine no more than two times per week is a good goal. Eliminating alcohol altogether is the best solution, especially if you are intent upon restoring your health.

HOW MUCH **WATER DO WE NEED?**

PURE WATER: FILTERED 6 – 8 CUPS MINIMUM DAILY

We can't always judge by our thirst how much water we need, except when we are thirsty it means that we are dehydrated. Many people have metabolic imbalances that either make them thirsty all the time or not experience much thirst. So, in general, ignore the signals or lack of signals and just know that a certain amount of water is needed each day to achieve good hydration.

All of the beverages we drink—coffee, tea, sodas — are mostly water sources that contain other ingredients as well. Consuming only these beverages may lead to dehydration—especially caffeine and acidic sodas. Drinking water is really the best way to meet our needs to hydrate.

The amount of water that we need is based on a few factors—our size, activity level, the temperature, and how much we sweat. On the average, we should drink at least 1½ to 2 quarts of water per day.

It is best to drink small amounts of water throughout the day to keep fully hydrated. Keep a bottle of water near you at all times, so that you can take sips fairly often, and as a reminder to drink some water every day. It is important that you drink beverages between meals.

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References:

[1] *Haas, E. Staying healthy with Nutrition, 2006: Celestial Arts, Berkeley, CA. p.15*

[2] *Washington Post newspaper, www.washingtonpost.com*

[3] *www.nrdc.org/water/drinking/bw/chap3.asp*

[4] *www.allergybuyersclub.com*