


News, trends, and fun finds

healthmatters

Don't Drink the Water



Even though bottled water costs 2,000 times more than tap, many of us happily pony up, believing we're paying for purity (cue images of picturesque mountain springs and tropical aquifers). But turns out we might not be. The Environmental Working Group (EWG) recently released a report that found 38 different contaminants in 10 brands of bottled drinking water, including bacteria, acetaminophen, fertilizer, solvents, plastic-making chemicals, and the radioactive element strontium.

While public water supplies are regulated by the government, the bottled kind is not. The International Bottled Water Association, which represents most of the industry, has voluntary standards that companies can follow to make sure their products don't contain contaminants. But the association does not require bottlers to reveal what's in their water, where it comes from, or how and if it is purified.

But don't trade bottled water for tap without investing in a filter. Testing has shown that 40 percent of all bottled water is really tap water anyway, which comes with its own problems. Recent studies found pharmaceuticals like antidepressants, sex hormones, and antibiotics in the water of 24 major US cities (including Philadelphia, San Francisco, and Washington, DC). Nanofiltration and reverse-osmosis systems have been shown to remove several drugs along with heavy metals and other chemicals. —LINDSAY WILSON