

WATER IS THE DEAL?

What does Health Canada and others say about bottled water?

Bottled water is big business. Consumers spent \$US100 billion to knock back bottled water this past year. When you're out on a hot day, nothing quite quenches the thirst like a bottle of cold H₂O, so it's understandable that millions of people are spending billions of dollars on bottled water rather than a can of pop or juice—except for one thing: the majority of bottled water is consumed not as a substitute for pop or juice but as a substitute for tap water which costs about 10,000 times less.

Does that make sense? See the below excerpts from Health Canada's Frequently Asked Questions section on bottled water to make your own call:

IS BOTTLED WATER SAFER THAN TAP WATER?

"Some people think that bottled water is safer than municipal tap water, but there is no evidence to support this."

ARE THERE BACTERIA IN BOTTLED WATER?

"Bottled water has harmless, naturally occurring bacteria, and under the Canadian Food and Drug Act it is required to be free of disease-causing organisms."

WHAT IS SAFE STORAGE AND USE OF BOTTLED WATER?

"A 1988 Health Canada study of bottled water kept at room temperature for 30 days showed a substantial increase in the bacterial count."

WHAT CAN I DO TO ENSURE SAFE USE OF BOTTLED WATER?

"While travelling, avoid bottled water unless it is carbonated or disinfected."

Source: www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/securit/facts-faits/bottle_water-eau_embouteillee/faqs_bottle_water-eau_embouteillee_e.html

For a population increasingly obsessed with what they put into their bodies, it's easy to fall for the slick ad campaigns and attractive jargon that advise them bottled water is the healthier choice. Consider Evian's pitch: It's website invites us to 'detox with Evian' and offers tips on the 'path to purity'. Every tip includes drinking Evian, or sipping Evian, or spraying your face with Evian—all things we could do with that cold stuff from the tap.

The portability of bottled water is an effective selling point, but filling a reusable bottle with tap water isn't exactly rocket science. The biggest draw seems to be the perceived benefits of bottled water over tap water. Many believe it's healthier because it comes from a supposedly 'pure' source. Some say it's safer because it doesn't contain bacteria. Below, we burst the bubbles surrounding some myths about bottled water, and give you a crystal clear picture of what it is you're really paying for.

Myth: Bottled water comes from a 'pure' source, like a bubbling mountain stream.

Reality: 40% of all bottled water comes from a municipal source rather than a natural spring, including Coca-Cola's Dasani and PepsiCo's Aquafina.

Myth: The plastic bottles from bottled water are reused or recycled.

Reality: 90% of the bottles from bottled water are thrown out after one use. They take 1,000 years to biodegrade.

Myth: Bottled water comes from a fairly local source unless otherwise indicated.

Reality: Nearly one quarter of bottled water produced crosses at least one national border to reach consumers.

Myth: Bottled water is consumed in place of sugary fruit drinks, pop or juice.

Reality: The majority of bottled water is consumed as a substitute for tap water.

Myth: Bottled water comes from plentiful sources.

Reality: The Coca-Cola water bottling plant in India has been accused of causing water shortages in 50 surrounding villages.

