



Bottled water and your health?

There is little evidence to suggest that bottled water is any safer, purer or healthier than tap water. Bottled water is not long-term solution to drinking water needs; there is no substitute for government when it comes to ensuring safe, accessible and affordable drinking water.

Regulation of the bottled water industry:

- Regulating the quality of bottled water is complicated. From origin to consumption, bottled water undergoes a multi-step process.
- Bottled water in Canada is considered a food product under the *Food and Drugs Act and Regulations*. Government regulatory oversight that exists has not been updated since 1973, with some minor changes made in the early 1980's. Other regulation of the bottled water industry is largely a voluntary process overseen by the industry.
- It is estimated that Canadian bottling plants receive government inspections once, on average every 3 to 5 years.
- There have been 29 recalls of 49 bottled water products since 2000 by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, 5 of which have been made public and were recalled due to bacterial or chemical contaminants.
- Bottled water in the U.S. is predominantly regulated by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and to a lesser extent by State bodies. According to FDA staff estimates, the agency has dedicated just one-half of a staff person to bottled water regulation, and less than one to ensuring bottled water compliance.
- According to the Natural Resource Defence Council (NRDC), in the U.S., water bottling plants are likely to be inspected once every 5 to 6 years. In their groundbreaking study, the NRDC shows that tap water regulations are almost always stricter than bottled water regulations.
- Peer-reviewed scientific studies have raised concerns with the quality of bottled water. Concentrations of contaminants such as arsenic, mercury, bromide, e. coli bacteria and lead have been found in bottled water samples.

Regulation of tap water:

- In Canada, the quality and safety of tap water is primarily a provincial/territorial or municipal responsibility. There are also federal Guidelines for Canadian Drinking Water Quality which set Maximum Allowable Concentrations for microbiological, chemical and radiological substances found in water that are known or thought to be, harmful to human health.
- Consider that the City of Ottawa staff conducts over 125,000 tests per year and the City of Toronto checks its water for bacteria every 4 to 6 hours.
- In the U.S., the quality and safety of tap water is regulated by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) under the Safe Drinking Water Act. The NRDC's in-depth 4 year study which included independent testing of bottled water samples, an analysis of government and academic bottled water testing results and more, concluded that





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regulation of tap water is much more stringent than that of bottled water. For example, the EPA requires clear standards regarding bacteria, inorganic and organic and chemical contaminants and more.

- Consider that San Francisco tests its water more than 100,000 times a year ensuring that it meets or exceeds water quality standards.

