

Drinking Water: Bottled or From the Tap?

By Catherine Clarke Fox

From *National Geographic Kids*

<http://kids.nationalgeographic.com/kids/stories/space-science/water-bottle-pollution/>

If your family is like many in the United States, unloading the week's groceries includes hauling a case or two of bottled water into your home. On your way to a soccer game or activity, it's easy to grab a cold one right out of the fridge, right?

But all those plastic bottles use a lot of fossil fuels and pollute the environment. In fact, Americans buy more bottled water than any other nation in the world, adding 29 billion water bottles a year to the problem. In order to make all these bottles, manufacturers use 17 million barrels of crude oil. That's enough oil to keep a million cars going for twelve months.

Imagine a water bottle filled a quarter of the way up with oil. That's about how much oil was needed to produce the bottle.

So why don't more people drink water straight from the kitchen faucet? Some people drink bottled water because they think it is better for them than water out of the tap, but that's not true. In the United States, local governments make sure water from the faucet is safe. There is also growing concern that chemicals in the bottles themselves may leach into the water.

People love the convenience of bottled water. But maybe if they realized the problems it causes, they would try drinking from a glass at home or carrying water in a refillable steel container instead of plastic.

Plastic bottle recycling can help. Instead of going out with the trash, plastic bottles can be turned into items like carpeting or cozy fleece clothing.

Unfortunately, for every six water bottles we use, only one makes it to the recycling bin. The rest are sent to landfills. Or, even worse, they end up as trash on the land and in rivers, lakes, and the ocean. Plastic bottles take many hundreds of years to disintegrate.

Water is good for you, so keep drinking it. But think about how often you use water bottles, and see if you can make a change.

And yes, you can make a difference. Remember this: Recycling one plastic bottle can save enough energy to power a 60-watt light bulb for six hours.

Hidden Costs of Bottled Water

From Insurance Quotes

<http://www.insurancequotes.org/hidden-cost-bottled-water/>

We all know that bottled water is a wasteful, high-cost convenience. But Americans are addicted. This year, we consumed four times as many gallons of bottled water as we did in 1997. So maybe it's time for a reminder: commercially bottled water isn't any cleaner or healthier than the water we get from tap. In fact, it's worse and it costs more.

In the U.S., municipal water supplies are tested multiple times every day. The moment a contaminant is detected, the supply is shut down and thoroughly investigated. Bottled water, on the other hand, is one of the least regulated commodities in the U.S. Independent studies have repeatedly found alarming levels of fecal material, bacteria, and plastic polymer chemicals in bottled samples.

Of course, the biggest costs come from the bottles themselves – considering that Americans go through 35 billion plastic bottles each year. Four in five of these bottles don't get recycled, choking up U.S. landfills or rivers. This is bad news for our water life and wildlife because many of these bottles contain traces of harmful xenoestrogens like BPA. Like other inorganic hormones, BPA compounds in fat cells and is never fully flushed out of our bodies. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) even banned this chemical from baby bottles and sippy cups last summer after dozens of studies linked long-term exposure to increased risks for certain cancers and birth defects.

Could the raising healthcare expenditures be allayed slightly if we paid more attention to the unperceived risks of drinking from BPA-laden water bottles? Perhaps, if you consider the correlation between BPA and cancer risks. The National Institutes of Health (NIH) provided an estimate in 2008 that cancers collectively accounted for \$77.4 billion in direct medical costs. Proper health insurance can ease the economic pains of paying for expensive cancer treatments, but the U.S. Census Bureau reported that about 50 million people were uninsured in 2010. Worse, by 2020 medical expenditures for cancer are expected to reach \$158 billion or higher.