

## Drinking Water

Drinking water is one of our most valuable natural resources. Although we often take it for granted, fresh water is a scarce resource that is being consumed faster than it is being replenished. Drinking water may come from underground stores (aquifers) or from surface water, which includes lakes, streams, and rivers.

Water is treated before being distributed for use. It is both filtered and disinfected, and sometimes fluoride is added to prevent tooth decay. Tap water, or water that comes out of the faucet, is regulated under the Safe Drinking Water Act. Water from private wells and bottled water are not regulated under the Safe Drinking Water Act.

If you use water from a municipal source, you can be assured of its safety with the annual consumer confidence report. You should receive this report by mail each year. The report will list the levels of common contaminants identified at the time of the testing. If the water does not meet federal standards, the water supplier is required to fix the problem or shut down.

If you use water from a private well, you should have the water tested to make sure it is safe for use. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulates bottled water, much like a packaged food. The FDA enforces similar water standards as the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) under the Safe Drinking Water Act. Bottled water may come from a variety of sources, including tap water. Read the label to find out where your bottled water comes from.

Resources\* (accessed 9/23/05):

Ground Water and Drinking Water, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency  
<http://www.epa.gov/safewater/>

“Bottled Water: Better than the Tap?” by U.S. Food and Drug Administration Consumer Magazine, July-Aug 2002  
[http://www.fda.gov/fdac/features/2002/402\\_h2o.html](http://www.fda.gov/fdac/features/2002/402_h2o.html)

International Bottled Water Association  
<http://www.bottledwater.org/>

\* If the addresses listed above are no longer valid, try searching the internet by the title of the document and/or author.