

## Homes & Real Estate

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### **Refreshing idea: Drinking tap water | EcoConsumer**

By reducing our purchases of drinking water in single-serve plastic bottles and drinking more tap water from home, experts say we can reduce climate change, conserve resources and save money.

By Tom Watson

Special to NWhomes

We have a resource in our home that billions of people around the world would cherish, yet we often take it for granted or think we need to improve it.

Nearly everyone in this region has clean and safe water at our fingertips. By reducing our purchases of drinking water in single-serve plastic bottles and drinking more tap water from home, experts say we can reduce climate change, conserve resources and save money.

#### **Limit the lead**

Seattle has “some of the highest-quality drinking water in the nation, because it comes from pristine, protected mountain sources,” according to Seattle Public Utilities (SPU).

Hazards aren't unheard of, however. Lead can potentially leach into water from home plumbing, if the plumbing system contains lead-based solder, for instance. “Household plumbing remains a main cause of lead contamination in homes built before 1986,” says Consumer Reports.

To reduce the risk of lead from pipes getting in drinking water, SPU recommends always using cold water for drinking or cooking, since lead dissolves more quickly in hot water.

In January, federal regulations took effect that reduced the maximum allowable amount of lead in plumbing fixtures from 8 percent to 0.25 percent, making it a no-brainer for homeowners and plumbers to choose low-lead fixtures.

#### **Filter it out**

If you're concerned about contaminants in your tap water or don't like the taste, consider a water filter. The many types available include a carafe-style pitcher with a filter, a faucet-mounted or countertop filter, and an undersink or reverse-osmosis filter.

Several carafes and faucet-mounted filters priced less than \$50 performed well in Consumer Reports tests. But filter-cartridge refills can be a high hidden cost, so check their price and how often you will need to change them. Undersink and reverse-osmosis models usually require costly professional installation.

Many new refrigerators come with ice and water dispensers with filtration systems, and those also may require expensive filter-cartridge refills.

## **Tout the tap**

You may need to make a concerted effort to get yourself and others in your household into the habit of drinking tap water. Set an example by filling your water glass at the kitchen sink, and don't buy single-serve bottled water by the case.

Reusable water bottles make it easy to take tap water on the go. These bottles have become fashionable in recent years, with hundreds of choices in stores and online. But regularly filling reusable bottles with tap water and taking them with you must be learned as a habit, like using reusable bags at the grocery store.

If your water bottle doesn't smell quite right — even slightly — it's probably caused by bacteria. It may not be especially harmful, but try to eliminate it. Wash reusable water bottles periodically and let them get completely dry.

Online retailer Reuseit.com, which offers dozens of types of reusable water bottles, sells brushes specifically designed to clean bottles. For children, consider a reusable water bottle with an easy-to-clean shape and wide mouth.

## **Find the perfect fit**

Reusable water bottle choices include:

**Plastic:** Lightweight and often inexpensive. Based on recent research and the potential for chemical leaching problems, bottles made from plastics #2 (high-density polyethylene), #4 (low-density polyethylene) and #5 (polypropylene) may be better choices than #7 (usually polycarbonate). To avoid chemical leaching, don't leave a plastic bottle in the sun or in a hot car. Place it on the top rack of the dishwasher if recommended by the manufacturer.

**Glass:** No aftertaste, but it they can be heavy and pricey. Plastic outer sleeves make breakage unlikely.

**Stainless steel:** Durable and typically expensive. Some are designed for hot beverages as well as cold.

**Aluminum:** Lightweight, so they can be tippy. Most water bottles are manufactured overseas, but Liberty Bottleworks uses recycled aluminum to make bottles with arty designs at its factory in Union Gap, near Yakima.

Among the simple, green pleasures of life, it's hard to beat tap water from home. Summer is almost here, so let's make a toast with our reusable water bottles to staying cool and hydrated.

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