

7 Reasons To Never Drink Bottled Water Again

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As a water-lover and expert on global water ethics, I see H₂O everywhere: waterfalls and lakes, drought and flood, sparkling, still, bottled, tap, from a well, in the surf, behind a dam, in plastic, in glass, from the cooler at yoga class, with or without ice.

How we drink our water shows us what kind of society we are. I want my body and my society to reflect sustainable values, so I only drink disposable, plastic bottled water if there is absolutely no alternative. If I were in a truly extreme situation—say, a cholera epidemic, an area without reliable water supply, or a desert, for example—then I would drink bottled water. Happily, most of us are not in those situations. And wonderful alternatives are easily available.

Sound extreme? It's not, when you consider these 7 truths about bottled water. Read on, and become a healthier person, a smarter consumer, and a global citizen!

1. Plastic bottles are not sustainable, no matter what we've been told.

Using vast quantities of fossil fuels and water, these bottles are manufactured, filled, and shipped around the globe. (Not a good carbon footprint!) Neither are bottles biodegradable in any meaningful way: what you drink in a few minutes can stick around for a thousand years.

Even with recycling efforts, 6 out of 7 plastic bottles consumed in the U.S. are “downcycled”—sent somewhere out of sight and out of mind where, for the next millennia, toxins from degrading plastic containers can leach into [watersheds and soil](#). That's just not something we need to give to global neighbors and future generations.

2. Most bottled water is glorified tap water at 10,000 times the cost.

The label on your bottled water may depict a peaceful mountain stream, but that doesn't mean the water inside is pure and pristine.

Only some bottled water comes from springs or groundwater sources. It turns out that approximately 25% of bottled water is sourced from ... the tap. Sure, some companies filter or radiate the tap water with ultraviolet light before selling it to you at several thousand times the cost of municipal tap water. (Examples include Aquafina, Dasani, and many other brands.)

Moreover, [studies show](#) that bottled water samples can contain phthalates, mold, microbes, benzene, trihalomethanes, even arsenic. And only recently did the FDA start regulating bottled water for E. Coli, thanks to advocacy by the Natural Resources Defense Council.

Upshot: bottled water markup is extreme. Health standards are often a wash and may even favor tap water. (If you're concerned about municipal water supply and want to know more, check out [this helpful resource](#), which can help you learn about your municipal water supply and decide if filtration or purification is right for you.)

3. Many bottled waters contain toxins, even if they've nixed BPA.

Plastic isn't just bad for the planet (see #1). It's not good for you, either.

Bottled water companies increasingly use BPA-free plastic, but laced into plastic bottles are [other chemicals that can seep out](#) if bottles are exposed to heat or sit around for a long time. Some of these chemicals are possible [endocrine disruptors](#). No one knows for sure what the health outcomes are. Do you really want your body to undergo that experiment?

4. Fashion, foodies, and sustainable cities are taking back the tap.

New York City's Fashion Week, Chez Panisse, the city of San Francisco and Grand Canyon National Park have all reduced or eliminated bottled water! AVEDA teamed up with New York's Department of Environmental Protection during Fashion Week 2010 to provide free drinking fountains on the streets of New York.

5. Local water is the new complement to local, organic food.

Local food is everywhere these days: CSAs, farmers markets, farm-to-table dining. That local food is grown and cooked with ... local water! It's the invisible part of the sustainable, healthy food you eat.

So, locavores, it's time to get your hydrophilia on and appreciate your water supply just as much as you do your CSA. Shouldn't we care for and support our water sources like we support healthy, organic, local farms?

6. There ARE gorgeous alternatives for on-the-go hydrophiles!

Choose a durable, re-useable water bottle (BPA-free or, even better, stainless steel) in whatever size or shape and design you like. I think of it as an accessory: at my most recent job interview, a team member commented on my green, reusable water bottle. (I got the job.)

For home, try the new, limited edition [Soma water carafe and filter](#). It's a sleek, glass carafe with the first-ever fully biodegradable filter (made from coconut shells—stupendously cool), with a new filter sent automatically every 60 days. As a working professional and parent with an eye for design, I love this. For those who want an in-sink filtration system, check out this helpful resource from [Food & Water Watch](#). And for sparkling water addicts (like myself), I highly recommend [Soda Stream](#).

7. Change is simple—and makes a real difference!

When you ditch disposable bottled water, you save money, live healthier, and join a movement for global sustainability. Plus, it's easy. And you'll save money.

Yes, you'll need to take that first step of buying your re-usable bottle, and then remember it when you jog out the door. But if "keys, wallet, yoga mat" are on your mental checklist anyway, what's one more item that saves you money and protects the planet?

If after six months, you still crave water from Fiji, then I suggest the following: take the money you've saved by sipping strategically. Treat yourself to a vacation in, well, Fiji—where you can hydrate, surf, relax, and celebrate the fact that you are an awesome part of the solution!

Interested in learning more? Join me on Twitter [@profpeppard](#) and become a global citizen with [#takebackthetap](#).