

supplier and ask for a copy of your Consumer Confidence Report. This report lists what regulated chemicals, microbes and bacteria may be in your drinking water and whether the system meets state and EPA drinking water standards.” The reports are generated and sent to customers annually and are available on request.

Well water is generally found to be safe to drink, says Yaggi, but no health authority tests it. “It’s going to be up to [residents] to have it tested every so often,” he says. Tests for bacteria and nitrates are inexpensive and are typically offered by county health departments. Yaggi recommends this test annually. A more extensive—and expensive—test for contaminants like lead and arsenic should be done every few years.

The tests aren’t limited to well users. “Safe municipal water doesn’t mean there isn’t a problem with the infrastructure that’s coming into your home,” says Yaggi. If your home has a lead service line, the EPA recommends contacting your water supplier to determine if you should have your water tested.

Even if all tests come back clean, Yaggi recommends erring on the side of caution with home purification.

A pitcher or faucet filter will add safety assurance, remove chlorine and improve flavor. (A shower filter is a good idea, too, to avoid the age-accelerating effects of chlorine). Whole-home filters are another option, but with all household water running through it, including that which washes or flushes, filter usage is degraded unnecessarily. Also unnecessary, except in extreme cases, are reverse osmosis units and distillers that waste water and electricity respectively.

In all cases, change the filters regularly. Failure to do so can release contaminants previously captured in the filter media.

Learn, purify and drink up confidently—but don’t stop there. The Flint wakeup call may be as simple as: don’t take clean water for granted. “The most important thing is to stop pollution at the source,” says Yaggi, “and to remain vigilant and hold public officials’ feet to the fire.” The best way to do that is to support the local advocacy organizations that are addressing safe water every day.



BETTER THAN BOTTLED

U.S. consumers purchase more than 34 gallons of bottled water per person each year, typically paying more than the price of gasoline for a product less regulated than tap water. Bottles require millions of barrels of oil annually and result in rampant accumulation of plastics in the waste stream. Fortunately, better options abound.

AT HOME Soma’s attractive carafe is made of glass, so your filtered water is not sitting in plastic between gulps. Plus, Soma donates to charity:water with each filter purchased sharing the right of clean water around the world. drinksoma.com

ON THE GO The wine cork-sized GoPure Pod is a unique design that purifies water like a magnet, pulling out impurities—including chlorine, nitrates, fluoride, bacteria, VOCs and heavy metals. Use in a pitcher at home or pop it into a reusable water bottle wherever you go. gopurepod.com

IN THE WILD LifeStraw’s design allows users to safely sip from nature—removing impurities like cryptosporidium and E. coli. Choose from the uber-portable straw or convenient bottle unit. lifestraw.com

AROUND THE GLOBE Insert the battery-operated SteriPEN into water anywhere and allow the UV light to kill bacteria (including E. coli and legionella), protozoa (like cryptosporidium and giardia) and—unlike filters!—viruses (like hepatitis). steripen.com