

What To Do When Your Water Tastes Bad

Gemma Alexander

It's understandable that Americans would be a little bit nervous about water quality these days. Not only is the news filled with stories about unsafe drinking water, but we are constantly bombarded by marketing messages trying to convince us that bottled water is better than tap. A lot of the time, the water coming out of the tap just tastes bad — so there has to be something wrong with it, right?

Well, it is true that many American communities [no longer have safe drinking water](#). But 80 percent of Americans' tap water is fine.

Even for the 63 million Americans whose taps deliver unsafe water, there is no assurance that what's in the bottle is safer (and the plastic bottle itself is definitely a [health risk](#)). It is also untrue that bad tasting water is necessarily bad water. Take a few minutes to understand the issue and make safe choices.

Water Flavor

Most of the [flavor in water](#) comes from dissolved minerals. Not only do minerals affect flavor, but they also improve the healthful qualities of the water.

Absolutely pure [distilled water](#) tastes awful and is not very healthy in large quantities or long-term. It can [leach minerals from your body](#). Sometimes contamination will affect the taste of water, but most of the bad-tasting contaminants are not dangerous.

Many of the most dangerous pollutants do not affect the flavor of the water. You just [can't tell by taste](#) if your water is safe, but it is not hard to [find out exactly](#) what is in your water.

Obviously, you [should not drink dirty water](#), but even if your water is clean, you probably won't feel like drinking it if it tastes like it is dirty. And that's a problem because [staying hydrated](#) is a fundamental healthy behavior that benefits every part of the body.

Tap Taste Fixes

Many of the fixes for bad-tasting tap water are the same ones you would use for contamination.

The U.S. Center for Disease Control's [useful guide](#) is a great starting point for finding the right filter or treatment system to eliminate both dangerous and bad-tasting substances from your water. Whole-house filtration systems or water softeners may not be necessary if taste is the only problem. The CDC notes that refrigerator and pitcher filters are insufficient for dangerous contaminants, but can improve the taste.

In fact, just [keeping water cold](#) in the refrigerator can minimize bad flavors.

Bottled Alternatives

Many Americans turn to bottled water when their tap water is foul.

The World Health Organization recently [reported](#) that microplastics in bottled water are widespread but that no conclusive evidence suggests they are dangerous. The report found that “Based on this limited body of evidence, firm conclusions on the risk associated with ingestion of microplastic particles through drinking-water cannot yet be determined; however at this point, no data suggests overt health concerns associated with exposure to microplastic particles through drinking-water.”

Because microplastics are found in more than 90 percent of bottles the issue deserves more research.

A Gourmet Glass

Since even water filters have some [environmental drawbacks](#), look for the smallest solution that will make your water palatable.

You might make the best of a bad-tasting situation by approaching the problem with flair instead of technology. A squeeze of lemon or a splash of juice in your water glass will mask most unpleasant water flavors. To maximize results without the per glass effort, you can make [creative infusions](#) of all kinds of fruit by the pitcher. (Just remember to drink it before the fruit goes bad.) If all else fails, there is some evidence that drinking [tea instead of plain water](#) every day has health benefits.

You Might Also Like...