



## How Safe is My Family's Tap Water?

As a parent, you want to do everything you can to keep your family as safe as possible. So, even the simple act of turning on the faucet may provoke a moment of thought and worry. Is the tap water safe? Should my child drink it? How will I know if I need to be concerned? What if I heat it? Fifty years ago, moms barely gave these questions a second thought. But today, advances in our understanding of the links between cleanliness of the water we drink and our health have helped us make better choices about what to do – or not do – with what comes out of the tap.

At UL, we want to make sure you have the information you need to keep your family safe. Make sure you learn more about your local water system by visiting [www.epa.gov/safewater/annual](http://www.epa.gov/safewater/annual). The information to answer the following questions was found at [www.epa.gov/safewater/dwh/index.html](http://www.epa.gov/safewater/dwh/index.html).

### Question 1: How safe is my drinking water?

**Answer:** In general, families don't need to worry about the safety of local drinking water. Despite many of the myths and horror stories about tap water safety, the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) regulation of the public water supply is extensive and well enforced. Your water is tested frequently – often daily, in many municipalities – and your local supplier is required to inform you within 24 hours if tested water does not meet EPA standards. If you have a private well, however, the EPA does not have the authority to regulate the quality of the water and it is up to the homeowner to take precautions to ensure the maintenance and protection of their drinking water supply.

To view more information about the current water quality in your municipality, visit: [www.epa.gov/safewater/dwinfo.htm](http://www.epa.gov/safewater/dwinfo.htm).

### Question 2: What problems can occur with my water?

**Answer:** It's rare for drinking water contamination to occur in the United States. If a contamination does happen, they are typically not at a level to pose a health concern.

While contamination is rare, there are several common sources of pollution to our water sources caused by naturally-occurring substances such as micro-organisms and heavy metals or human activities like fertilizers and pesticides, industrial products and wastes, household waste, and bacteria or nitrates from human or animal waste.

A health risk can also be posed if drinking water is not properly treated or disinfected or if it travels through an improperly maintained distribution system.

### Question 3: How can I tell if there's a problem with my water?

**Answer:** We've all taken a sip from the tap and tasted something amiss – but does that mean the water itself is unsafe to drink? Not necessarily. Harmless, trace amounts of minerals in the water or pipes can change the taste and softness of water. Additionally, the pipes beneath your home can have as many problems as the water that runs through them.

No matter what, if you are concerned about your water, have it tested by a professional or contact your local municipality for more information.

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## How Safe is My Family's Tap Water? (continued)

### Question 4: What can I do to protect my drinking water?

**Answer:** More than ever, families must be informed, observant and involved. Make sure that you know the water quality standards and testing frequency of your local area. Review the annual consumer confidence report from your supplier and keep apprised of potential threats by reading your state's Source Water Assessment report, available annually online.

Additionally, try to make time to attend meetings held by local government officials on water quality testing and standard. These events can be invaluable in helping you learn more about how to keep your family safe.

If you have a private well, testing kits and services are available to help you analyze the contents of your water and determine if steps need to be taken. More information on home testing and kits can be found on [www.uldrinkwell.com](http://www.uldrinkwell.com).

### Question 5: What can I do if there is a problem with my drinking water?

**Answer:** Any number of unexpected local incidents – such as spills and treatment problems – can lead to short-term needs for alternative water supplies or in-home treatment. In rare cases, families may need to find alternative sources for the long term due to specific health needs.

- **Bottled Water:** Bottled water is an easy, relatively convenient solution to dealing with poor local water quality. However, most families don't realize that bottled water is not required to undergo the same testing as the water that comes from the tap. Remember, just because it's marketed as cleaner does not mean it actually is. Check with the [International Bottled Water Association](#) to see if your favorite brand adheres to FDA standards.

- **Point-of-use/Entry Systems:** Most people do not need to treat drinking water in their home to make it safe. However, a home water treatment unit can improve water's taste or provide a factor of safety for those people more vulnerable to waterborne disease. There are different options for home treatment systems. Point-of-use (POU) systems treat water at a single tap, while point-of-entry (POE) systems treat water used throughout the house. Visit [www.epa.gov/safewater](http://www.epa.gov/safewater) for more information on both solutions.

### Question 6: Can I use tap water in my baby's bottle?

**Answer:** Yes, it is safe to use tap water in your baby's formula. Be sure to use cold water and let the water run for a few minutes before you use it. This can reduce the chance of lead and other mineral contamination. To heat it up, do not use the microwave as pockets of intense heat can occur. Use a warm water bath instead.

Source: EPA <http://www.epa.gov/safewater/dwh/index.html>

