

Drinking water is good for you. In fact, it is an essential nutrient and humans could not live without it. Nutritionists say most people should drink eight glasses of water every day. Throughout history most people drank water from rivers and streams. Then with indoor plumbing, drinking water just meant turning on your tap and filling a glass. In 1977, Perrier began to put water in bottles to sell to consumers. They launched a five million dollar advertising campaign to convince consumers to buy water. The advertisements stated it was safer and cleaner than tap water, so sales began to soar as people worried that their tap water was not safe. This was the beginning of a multi-million dollar industry of selling bottled water. Today, the bottled water industry makes over 50 billion dollars per year and over half of all Americans drink bottled water. On average each person in the United States drinks about 167 bottles of water per year and global consumption is increasing more than 10% every year. Bottled water can cost about \$12.00 per gallon, almost three times the cost of gasoline and almost 4000 times the cost of tap water. But, is bottled water really better or are we just paying for the convenience of being able to carry it around? Many people across the world have begun to question the environmental impact of the bottled water industry and some cities are beginning to ban bottled water. The environmental impact is not worth the convenience of bottled water and it is not a better product than tap water.

Many people do not realize that making plastic water bottles has a cost and that cost is not worth the small benefit humans receive for a convenient container of water. Plastic water bottles are made out of oil. In fact, it takes about 17 million barrels of oil to make the 29 billion water bottles each year. That amount of oil is enough to power 1 million vehicles on the road for 12 months. It is also estimated that to pump the water into the bottles, process them, ship them and then refrigerate them it takes another 50 billion barrels of oil. Not only could that oil be used for other purposes, but the use of the oil releases about 2.5 million tons of carbon dioxide into the air, which adds to the pollution and process of climate change. In addition, it takes about 3 liters of water to make a 1 liter plastic bottle. Water is also a precious resource and the waste of water to create a bottle of water does not make any sense. The true cost of a water bottle is not the \$2.00 a person may spend on it at the

grocery store. The true cost of a water bottle is millions of gallons of oil, millions of tons of pollution into the atmosphere and millions of gallons of wasted water. That cost is just too great for the small convenience of being able to carry and throw away a container of water.

Although the bottled water industry does create fully recyclable plastic water bottles, very few bottles are actually recycled. Of the 29 million produced in 2005 only 13% were recycled. The other 87% end up in landfills and garbage dumps all over the United States. Over 50 billion plastic water bottles end up in the garbage around the United States every year. That is 140 million every single day. Given that it takes about 1000 years for one water bottle to decompose, we will have billions and billions of water bottles in our landfills for centuries. As the plastic decays, chemicals and other toxic substances are released into the ground polluting other sources of water, poisoning animals and destroying habitat. For a few seconds of convenience, we are threatening ourselves with thousands of years of waste and pollution.

About 25% of bottled water is actually tap water. Dasani and Aquafina just bottle water from Queens and from Jacksonville, FL. So the idea that bottled water is better than tap water does not make sense, because so much of it is actually just tap water. The water that is not tap water is not regulated by the EPA like municipal water and may actually be worse for you than tap water. A study by the [NRDC](#) found that one company was taking water from a site next to a hazardous waste dump. Much of the advertised “spring water” or “glacier water” is neither and the companies do not have to report where they really get their water from. The [NRDC](#) study also found harmful chemicals and bacteria in about one fifth of all the bottled water they tested. Both Good Morning America and Showtime have done taste testing studies and in a blind taste test, participants actually thought the tap water tasted better. So bottled water is neither safer, nor better tasting than tap water. The advertisements just want to make you believe that in order to sell more products.

Bottled water is connected to the oil industry, to land pollution and to climate change. So much about this issue is really much bigger than convenient water. It is about money

and making money for the water bottle industry. Water bottles cannot be banned completely, but there are many actions people and governments can take to help their citizens make better choices. People should be encouraged to recycle the bottles they do use and also educated and encouraged to use their own containers to carry water. Towns and cities can begin to build hydration stations, like many college campuses and the city of Toronto, so people can fill their water containers conveniently and still get the healthy water they need. The bottom line is that really it is up to each person to make the right choices. A few minutes of convenience is not worth thousands of years of pollutants and chemicals leaking into the earth and our normal drinking water. The long term effects are really damaging and we must take action now to make a better planet for tomorrow.

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