



Extension News Column

*University of Alaska Fairbanks, Cooperative Extension Service, www.uaf.edu/ces/
fycit@uaf.edu, 907-474-5211, FAX 907-474-6885*

Contact: Debbie Carter, information officer, 907-474-5406, dscarter@alaska.edu

Author: Roxie Rodgers Dinstel, Tanana District Extension Faculty, HHFD

Drink tap water

We've all heard the lectures about how important it is to drink water. The USDA recommends that we drink 64 ounces of water a day, or half a gallon. Getting all that water requires planning, but it doesn't have to dent your budget.

Over the last few years, in an effort to get this amount of water, many people have started carrying a bottle of water with them. But these individual bottles of water come at a price to both our pocketbook and our environment.

It takes 1.5 million barrels of oil every year to manufacture the disposable bottles that we use in the United States. That's enough to fuel 100,000 cars for a year. That's quite a cost. In addition, nearly 90% of these bottles aren't recycled and end up in a landfill.

You'll also spend \$1400 for the cost of this 1/2 gallon of water daily for a year. If you choose to drink tap water, you'll spend \$1.26 here in Fairbanks for the same amount of water.

So is there any advantage to bottled water?

Bottled water manufacturers' encourage the perception that their products are purer and safer than tap water. Bottled water can cost up to 10,000 times more per gallon than tap water. But the reality is that tap water is actually held to more stringent quality standards than bottled water, and some brands of bottled water are just tap water in disguise. One of my favorite stories on this subject is that water bottled as Spring Water and sold in the grocery store was actually tap water from Spring, Texas. In the strictest interpretation, it was Spring water, but not what most people expect when they read the label.

Sometimes you can't get around the taste of water. There are some places in Fairbanks that the water simply doesn't taste good. If you don't like the taste of your tap water or are unsure of its quality, you can buy a filter pitcher or install an inexpensive faucet filter to remove trace chemicals and bacteria. If you will be away from home, fill a reusable bottle from your tap and refill it along the way; travel bottles with built-in filters are also available.

Typical water filter running costs vary between about \$0.09 per gallon and \$0.25 per gallon. This same amount of water would cost between \$16 and \$45--still considerable cheaper than those individual bottles of water.

If you have questions about your tap water, check the EPA website at <http://www.epa.gov/safewater/faq/faq.html#safe> . They even have a place on the website to check the annual water quality reports for many local water systems.

I had a call last week from a consumer asking if the Fox water was tested and where to find the results. I called the Department of Environmental Conservation and found that they test the water supply monthly and that it is perfectly safe. So if you have a yen to drive to Fox for real spring water, do it!