

2018 February Health Notes by Evelyn Ames

Comments on the “Water Consciousness Movement”

Public health officials suggest that the trend toward drinking “raw water” (unfiltered, untreated, unsterilized spring water, costing from \$15 to \$35 a gallon) puts the nut in health nut! They are concerned about the dubious claims (benefits of unsterilized water versus dangers of tap water) made by companies selling “raw” water.

“Naturally probiotic. Perfected by nature,” boasts Live Water, which sells raw water sourced from Opal Spring near Madras, Oregon. The company claims their spring water is free of industrial toxins and rich in healthy microbes because it is not processed. In actuality, Live Water sources from the same monitored spring that feeds the municipal tap in Madras, Oregon. Live Water webpage advertises “Sodium, potassium, magnesium and calcium are the four primary electrolytes that maintain the body’s fluid balance. LIVE WATER is abundant in each. There is even trace amounts of lithium and copper. Our naturally alkaline water is ideal for everyday use at a pH of 8. Our Probiotic Report shows four raw water exclusive probiotics that aren’t found in any other food source.” Ironically, in this report, the following contaminant was reported: *Pseudomonas oleovorans*, a “Gram-negative, methylotrophic bacterium that was first isolated in water-oil emulsions used as lubricants and cooling agents for cutting metals.” Does this seem healthy? Live Water advertisements suggest that filtered and bottled spring waters are sterilized with UV light, ozone gas and filtration systems similar in the way juice and dairy products are pasteurized for shelf stability. The company suggests sterilization destroys beneficial sources of minerals and probiotics, whereas “living spring water is the key to unlocking a perfect microbiome balance.”

The measure of cleanliness of drinking water is what one cannot see. In relation to mountain streams, herds of deer, elk, cougars or other animals or people have relieved themselves in the streams. Has the groundwater been contaminated from naturally occurring elements such as radon, uranium, and arsenic? Have pesticides and other chemicals flowed into the water? When hiking in the mountains, the CDC strongly recommends boiling, filtering or disinfecting water from streams and river before drinking it and calls the modern water treatment techniques “One of the Ten Greatest Public Health Achievements of the 20th Century.” The longevity of Americans increased dramatically following public water filtration systems in the early 1900’s.

Water treatment is intended to remove harmful bacteria such as *E.coli*, *Salmonella* and *Giardia*, a common parasite that causes a diarrheal illness called giardiasis and can be contracted by drinking “untreated or improperly treated water from lakes, streams, or wells”. The [Safe Drinking Water Act \(SDWA\)](#) requires the Environmental Protection Agency to put in place certain standards to ensure tap water is safe to drink. The Food and Drug Administration regulates water that is bottled and sold to consumers. The water molecule is the same whether the water is pulled from a spring or comes out of the tap. The difference is what else is in the water!

For the International Traveler, here are CDC guidelines on “What’s Safer: Food and Beverage Safety.”

Unclean food and water can cause travelers’ diarrhea and other diseases. Travelers to developing countries are especially at risk. In otherwise healthy adults, diarrhea is rarely serious or life-threatening, but it can certainly make for an unpleasant trip. Steps to keep in mind when traveling!

What’s Safer: Pasteurized dairy products like milk; “Dry” food like bread or crackers; Water, sodas, or sports drinks that are bottled and sealed (carbonated is safer); Hot coffee or tea; Hard-cooked eggs; Food that is cooked and served hot; Meat that is cooked all the way through; Food from a factory sealed package or container; Fruit and vegetables you have washed in clean water or peeled

What’s Not: Fountain drinks; Water or ice made from the tap or a well Flavored ice pop; Unpasteurized dairy products; Food from street vendors; Bushmeat (monkeys, bats, or other wild game); Food served at room temperature; Raw or undercooked (rare) meat or fish; Raw or soft-cooked (runny) eggs; Unwashed or unpeeled raw fruits and vegetables; Salads.

Extra: In the past few years, cautions have been made about drinking coffee and tea served on airplanes, especially international travel. Concern is about how clean water is when siphoned into airplanes. Bottled water is no problem. Travelers might wish to take their own hot coffee/tea (after passing through inspection).

Sources: <http://www.myajc.com/lifestyles/food--cooking/raw-water-trend-all-wet-cdc-says-drinking-untreated-water-health-risk/fizzxgKzmrEoogvVtrwZP/>
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