

6 Popular water myths

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From this month, for the first time, South African bottled water will be officially regulated and monitored by the Department of Health.

And both here and in the United States important moves are being made to clamp down on bottled-water suppliers that don't specify the source of the water on their labels, whether it be natural or municipal.

With water being in the news right now, we decided to dispel a few popular water myths:

Myth: Clear water is safe water

"Just because water looks clear, doesn't mean that there's nothing dissolved in it," says Dr Frans Kruger, director of Purificare Water Purifiers.

Clear water may contain inorganic minerals, herbicides, pesticides, bacteria, viruses, hormones, chemicals and toxins – in other words, substances that could harm you. Municipal water quality varies from time to time and one can't determine what's been dumped in it just by looking at it.

Myth: Bottled water isn't tap water

While many bottled-water suppliers get their water from natural sources, some bottlers do indeed use tap/municipal water as a source/raw material for their processed water, according to the South African Natural Bottled Water Association (SANBWA).

One example of such a product is Bonaqua, which is produced by the Coca-Cola Company.

Myth: Flavoured water is a whole lot better than soft drinks

Unfortunately, flavoured, sweetened water isn't that much healthier than soft drinks. These drinks still contain a lot of sugar and have a high kilojoule content as a result.

Purely in terms of kilojoules, a 340ml can of Coca-Cola is equivalent to 2½ slices of bread, while 500ml flavoured, sweetened water is equivalent to 2 slices of bread. This is bad news for your waistline and for your teeth.

Myth: A filter effectively gets rid of harmful substances in water

A filter does indeed filter water, clearing it from some harmful substances. However, dirt, which may become the perfect breeding ground for bacteria, collects at the filter point. "What concerns me is the fact that a filter itself doesn't have an outflow for the contaminants," Dr Kruger says.

Cleaning your filter every hour or two could be a solution, but might not always be practical. Water purification, which is done through reverse osmosis, might be more useful in ridding water of harmful substances.

Myth: The minerals in mineralised water can make up for a mineral-poor diet

Some people believe that drinking a few glasses of mineral-enriched water every day is

equivalent to eating a bowl of vegetables. But this belief simply doesn't make sense. "If this could be true, I would buy the patent and go to Ethiopia and feed the hungry," Dr Kruger says.

Kruger makes the important point that water isn't supposed to be anything else than pure water, which forms the basis of a healthy diet. "Get your needed minerals from the right sources: fresh fruit and vegetables. If you want something alive in your water... get an aquarium."

(Carine van Rooyen, August 2007)

Sources:

- *PurifiCare Newsletters, compiled by Dr Frans Kruger, www.purificaresa.net*
- *Website of the South African Natural Bottled Water Association, www.sanbwa.org.za*