



Consumer Fact Sheet

BOTTLED WATER

What is Bottled Water?

Bottled water is water which has been packaged in sealed containers for human consumption. It includes water represented as “spring” water or “mineral” water and water from various other sources that may have been treated to make it fit for human consumption.

What are the different types of bottled water?

According to current regulations, bottled water may be represented as “spring” or “mineral” water only if it originates from an underground source which is not part of a community water supply. The water must be naturally fit for human consumption at its point of origin and may not be subjected to any treatment that would modify the original chemical composition of the water. The only treatments permitted include carbonation, the addition of ozone as a disinfecting agent or fluoridation to prevent dental cavities. Generally, mineral water contains a larger amount of dissolved mineral salts than spring water.

Bottled water that is not labelled as “spring” or “mineral” may be from any source and can be treated to make it fit for human consumption or to modify its original composition. The label of these waters must show how they have been treated. The following product names must appear on the label:

“**distilled water**” - when the treatment includes distillation (ie. vaporization and condensation);

“**demineralized water**”- when the treatment, by means other than distillation, results in the mineral content being reduced to less than 10 parts per million; and

“**carbonated water**” - when the water contains added carbon dioxide, making it effervescent.

Bottled waters that do not fit into one of the above categories, and do not qualify to be represented as spring or mineral water, may be named by any other appropriate term which is accurate and not misleading.

Could tap water be used to manufacture bottled water?

Yes, except for water represented as spring or mineral water. Some bottled waters such as “distilled” or “demineralized” water may be tap water that has undergone a treatment process to lower the mineral content and/or remove chemicals such as chlorine.

What information is required to appear on the label of bottled water?

Like any prepackaged food, bottled water must carry the following basic labelling information:

- common name,
- list of ingredients if it consists of more than one ingredient,
- net quantity, and
- name and address of the company responsible.

Additional labelling requirements specific to bottled water include the following:

For all bottled waters:

- fluoride ion content;

For “spring” and “mineral” water:

- dissolved mineral salt content,
- statement indicating whether ozone or fluoride has been added, and
- statement relating the geographic location of the underground source of the water.

For bottled waters, other than “spring” or “mineral” water:

- description of any treatment the water has undergone.

Could bottled water have bacteria in it?

Bottled water is not a sterile product. However, it is required to be free of disease causing organisms. Like most foods, bottled water may contain naturally occurring bacteria which typically have little or no health significance.

Is bottled water safer than tap water?

Manufacturers and importers of bottled water are required to ensure that their products continually meet the Canadian health and safety standards. Quality standards for bottled and municipal waters are similar. Both bottled and municipal waters that meet or exceed their required health and safety standards, are considered to be safe. At the present time, no waterborne disease outbreaks have been associated with drinking bottled water in Canada.

Health Canada recommends that populations particularly susceptible to illness or disease should consider either boiling their water prior to use or using only sterile water. This recommendation applies to infants, pregnant women, the frail elderly and those whose immune system has been weakened by disease, surgery or therapy.

What should I consider before purchasing bottled water?

Examine the bottles closely before purchasing and buy only bottles where the seal is unbroken. Make sure the water is clear and free of debris. The consumer should avoid refilling old bottles unless they have been properly cleaned and sanitized.

How should bottled water be stored?

Water should always be stored in well-sealed containers. Large quantities of bottled water may be stored in a cool, dark storage area such as a basement or warehouse. As with other foods, if bottled water is being stockpiled in long term storage, care should be taken to rotate the inventory so that no product in storage will exceed its shelf life. Most bottled water manufacturers indicate that their product has a two-year shelf-life.

How is bottled water regulated?

Bottled water is considered to be a food product and is regulated under the Food and Drugs Act and Regulations. These regulations include requirements for microbiological quality, composition and labelling. Like any prepackaged consumer product, bottled water is also subject to the requirements of the Consumer Packaging and Labelling Act and Regulations.

Health Canada establishes health and safety standards for the bottled water sold in Canada through the Food and Drugs Act. The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) enforces these standards. The CFIA also sets and enforces requirements under both of the above-mentioned Acts to protect consumers against fraud in relation to the composition, packaging, labelling and advertising of bottled water. As part of its enforcement role, CFIA can inspect products, labels, and establishments involved in the sale, manufacture and distribution of bottled water. In addition, some provincial and municipal ministries and agencies may regulate and inspect bottled water.

Other Sources of Information

http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/food-aliment/english/organization/microbial_hazards/faqs_bottle_water-eng.html

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