



WATER 101: ALL ABOUT TESTING AND FILTERS

TESTING YOUR WATER

Before you make any decisions about filters for your home, you'll want to check the makeup of your tap water. There are a few ways to go about doing this:

Go directly to the source.

Every year, your water agency is required by the EPA to supply you with a Consumer Confidence Report. This is an annual water quality report that details all contaminants present in your water and alerts you to the health risks they pose. They are required to provide this each year by July 1.

Click here to find your county's latest report:

<https://ofmpub.epa.gov/apex/safewater/f?p=136:102>

Check the EWG database.

Go to The Environmental Working Group's National Drinking Water Database (<http://www.ewg.org/tap-water/>) and enter your zip code to quickly discover what's in your tap water and how these chemicals may affect your health.

Get your water tested by an independent lab.

If your water comes from a well, you'll want to have it tested regularly. You can find a laboratory in your area by calling the EPA's Safe Drinking Water Hotline at 800-426-4791 or by visiting the Water Quality Associations search page. <https://www.wqa.org/Programs-Services/Resources/Find-Providers/Find-Certified-Professionals>

Do it yourself.

Visit <http://www.watercheck.com/index.php> to purchase a kit to test your water yourself.



FILTERING YOUR WATER

Once you've determined the types of contaminants in your water, it's time to make some decisions about filtration. Note that the legal limits for regulated chemicals in the drinking supply are not at levels that many independent scientists believe are truly safe. To safeguard your health, my advice is to take steps to clear contaminants from your water via filtration.

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FILTERING YOUR WATER

Here are the basic types of water filters, adapted from the EWG's Water Filter Buying Guide:



PITCHERS	PROS	CONS
Pitchers are typically fitted with an activated carbon filter that can remove contaminants and improve taste and odor. Many reduce chlorine, lead, mercury, and (less frequently) disinfection byproducts. Pitchers work well for filtering water that can be easily stored in the fridge.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inexpensive • No installation needed • Available in many sizes and styles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires frequent filter changes • Filtering is slow • Yearly cost with replacing filters may equal expense of faucet, countertop, or under-sink filters
FAUCET-MOUNTED	PROS	CONS
These filters attach directly to the end of the faucet. This style typically uses an activated carbon filter that can remove contaminants and improve taste and odor. Models vary, but many reduce chlorine, lead, mercury, and (less frequently) disinfection byproducts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relatively inexpensive • Easy to install • Allows user to switch between filtered and unfiltered water • Filtration is fast 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not work with all faucet styles • May slow down faucet flow rate • Must change filter more frequently than with countertop or under-sink filters
ON-COUNTER	PROS	CONS
On-Counter filters typically sit on the counter with a line connecting directly to the faucet. A diverter valve allows you to switch between filtered and unfiltered water. You collect filtered water from an extra spout or faucet on the filter unit. Models use a range of technologies, including activated carbon and reverse osmosis. Effectiveness varies widely between models, but many will reduce a wide array of contaminants.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May allow user to switch between filtered and unfiltered water • Requires relatively infrequent filter changes • Ideal for filtering both drinking and cooking water 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires installation and possibly plumbing modification • Can be expensive (but not always)
UNDER SINK	PROS	CONS
Under-sink filters are mounted underneath the kitchen sink, where they are fitted to the water supply line. Some models have a separate spout or faucet for filtered water collection. Models use a range of technologies, including activated carbon to reverse osmosis. Effectiveness varies widely between models, but many will reduce a wide array of contaminants.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Placed out-of-sight under the sink • Requires filter changes relatively infrequently • Ideal for filtering both drinking and cooking water 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires installation and possible plumbing modification • Can be expensive (but not always)