

What's Really in Your Bottled Water?

Consumer Reports found toxic PFAS chemicals in several popular water brands, especially carbonated ones

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3.1K SHARES

CR recently tested 47 bottled waters, including 35 noncarbonated and 12 carbonated ones. For each product, we tested two to four samples. The tests focused on four heavy metals (arsenic, cadmium, lead, and mercury), plus 30 PFAS chemicals, which pose special concerns because they can linger in the environment almost indefinitely.

The federal government has issued only voluntary guidance for PFAS, saying the combined amounts for two specific PFAS compounds should be below 70 parts per trillion. A few states have set lower limits, of 12 to 20 ppt, according to American Water Works, an industry group. The International Bottled Water Association, another group, says that it supports federal limits for PFAS and that bottled water should have PFAS levels below 5 ppt for any single compound and 10 ppt for more than one. Some experts say the cutoff for total PFAS levels should be even lower, 1 ppt.

Noncarbonated Water

Most of the noncarbonated products CR tested had detectable levels of PFAS, but only two—Tourmaline Spring and Deer Park—exceeded 1 part per trillion. Tourmaline Spring says the amount of PFAS in its bottled water is below the levels set by the IBWA and all states. Nestlé, which makes Deer Park, says that its most recent testing for the brand indicated undetectable levels of PFAS.

All noncarbonated water that CR tested had heavy metal levels well below federal safety limits, with one exception: Starkey Spring Water owned by Whole Foods. It had arsenic levels just shy of the federal limit of 10 parts per billion and more than three times as much as CR's recommended level of 3 ppb.

The company's "highest priority is to provide customers with safe, high-quality, and refreshing spring water," Whole Foods says. "These products meet all FDA requirements and are fully compliant with FDA standards for heavy metals."

Carbonated Water

All carbonated water that CR tested fell below legal limits for heavy metals, and none had arsenic levels above CR's recommended maximum of 3 parts per billion. But many products had measurable amounts of PFAS.

There are a few possible reasons. Phil Brown, at the PFAS Project Lab at Northeastern University in Boston, says the carbonation process could be a factor. The source water could also have more PFAS, or treatment used by some brands doesn't remove PFAS to below 1 part per trillion.

CR heard back from all companies with PFAS levels above 1 ppt, except for Bubly. La Croix and Canada Dry said levels in their products were well below current standards or requirements. Topo Chico, made by Coca-Cola and with the highest PFAS levels in CR's tests, said it would "continue to make improvements to prepare for more stringent standards in the future." Nestlé, maker of Poland Spring and Perrier, said that its recent testing did not detect PFAS and that it supports efforts to set federal limits. LaCroix and Polar challenged how CR arrived at our total PFAS amounts. For details, read CR's methodology for testing bottled water.

Brian Ronholm, CR's director of food policy, says that PFAS in carbonated water highlights the need for the federal government to set science-based limits for PFAS compounds in tap and bottled drinking water. "The fact that so many brands had total PFAS below 1 ppt shows it is feasible to get to more protective levels," he says.

Noncarbonated

LOWER HEAVY METAL AND PFAS LEVELS

365 Everyday Value

(Whole Foods) Spring Water

Absopure

Purified Water

Alkaline88

Natural Alkaline Water

Aquafina

Natural Purified Water

Arrowhead*

Natural Spring Water

Boxed Water Is Better*

Water

Core

Hydration Natural

Enhanced Water

Crystal Geyser
Natural Spring Water

Dasani
Natural Purified Water

Essentia
Natural Purified Alkaline Water

Evian
Natural Spring Water
Fiji Water
Natural Artesian Water

Flow
Alkaline Spring Water

Good & Gather* (Target)
Purified Drinking Water

Great Value (Walmart)
Natural Purified Water

Ice Mountain
Natural Spring Water

Just
100% Spring Water

Just The Basics
(CVS) Purified Water

Kirkland Signature
(Costco Purified Water)

LifeWtr
Natural Purified Water

Liquid Death
Spring Water

Nestlé Pure Life

Natural Purified Water

Niagara

Natural Purified Water

Ozarka

Natural Spring Water

Pathwater

Purified Water

Penta

Ultra Pure Water

Poland Spring

Natural Spring Water

Saratoga

Natural Spring Water

Smartwater

Natural Enhanced Water

Trader Joe's

Alkaline Water + Electrolytes

Waiakea

Hawaiian Volcanic Water

Zephyrhills

Natural Spring Water

* Had no detectable PFAS.

TOTAL PFAS OVER 1 PPT

ARSENIC OVER 3 PPB

Deer Park

Natural Spring Water (1.21 ppt)

Tourmaline Spring

Sacred Living Water (4.64 ppt.)

Starkey Spring Water

(Whole Foods) (9.53 ppb)

Carbonated

LOWER TOTAL PFAS LEVELS

CARBONATED BRANDS

Sparkling Ice Black Raspberry Sparkling Water

Spindrift Raspberry Lime Sparkling Water

Sanpellegrino Natural Sparkling Mineral Water

Dasani Black Cherry Sparkling Water

Schweppes Lemon Lime Sparkling Water Beverage

TOTAL PFAS

(PARTS PER TRILLION)

Not Detected

0.19

0.31

0.37

0.58

TOTAL PFAS OVER 1 PPT

Perrier Natural Sparkling Mineral Water

La Croix Natural Sparkling Water

Canada Dry Lemon Lime Sparkling Seltzer Water

Poland Spring Zesty Lime Sparkling Water

Bubly Blackberry Sparkling Water

Polar Natural Seltzer Water

Topo Chico Natural Mineral Water

1.1

1.16

1.24

1.66

2.24

6.41

9.76

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