



Confronting the toxins inside

Honest Health

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Living in a \$3 million mansion could be killing you softly; but sharing a three-bedroom walkup could actually strengthen your immune system.

I am not talking mortgages or exercise; I am describing the effects of the water flowing from your home faucets right now. Are you protected?

About 60 percent of our body is made up of water! So any toxins lurking in water we drink, shower or soak in, can end up affecting us.

Chlorine, mercury, lead and other heavy metals, hormones from drugs and pesticides and something called perchlorate, a chemical used in air bags, electronics, fertilizers and rocket fuel, are all now found in soil, groundwater, drinking water and irrigation water around the country.

Perchlorate interferes with the ability of the thyroid to get enough iodide, a necessary nutrient that protects against breast cancer. Perchlorate, at higher doses, has also been linked to thyroid cancer and a weakened immune system.

Lacking federal regulations, New Hampshire and most other states still ignore perchlorate levels in municipal water supplies. In 2006, however, Massachusetts passed the strictest perchlorate law in the nation, limiting contamination to 2 parts per billion. (Contact your state representative and say thank you!)

However, chlorine, still used to eradicate dangerous bacteria in most municipal water supplies, was shown in a 1992 Harvard study to raise the risk of bladder cancer by 21 percent and rectal cancer by 38 percent. A 2007 study published in the International Journal of Health Geography also supports this connection between chlorinated water supplies and a significant increase in rectal cancer, especially in areas, such as Cape Cod and Cape Ann, where shallow ground water is the major source of municipal water.

Several years ago, I met a well respected North Shore internist who laughed at the concept of filtering his home water supply.

"The town water is fine," he told me, when I asked for a glass of water one evening and flinched as I watched him fill my glass from his tap.

"But what about the yucky chlorine taste you get when you make coffee with this stuff?" I asked, as I politely drank the tainted-tasting glass of aqua.

"Oh! I just leave my coffee water out over night," he said. "The chlorine evaporates by morning."

But what about the heavy metals, the hormones and the other carcinogens that don't evaporate? I wondered.

I will never know if drinking that town's municipal water, unfiltered, for 40 years was a factor, but a few years ago, my 65-year-old physician friend died of pancreatic cancer.

Meanwhile, with no regulations on bottled water, and with new research showing that chemical hormones from some plastics can shed, most bottled water is less than best. So what can a person do about this unsafe water pouring out our taps?

Unis Brothers Plumbing in Gloucester, now partners with John Knowlton of Pure Water Systems, to install economical whole-house water filters for a client's specific health concerns or a basic system to protect optimal health.

Pure Water of Gloucester and Stoneybrook Water in Manchester, both install and service a stainless steel drinking water system for your kitchen or office counter. These basic systems pull out the chlorine and some heavy metals.

For those wanting the purest drinking water possible, however, go visit Pure Water's reverse osmosis machines in Gloucester's Main Street (Walgreen's) Plaza. This sophisticated system dispenses water that is economical and free of chlorine, heavy metals and hormones. Morning tea has never tasted better.

So show your love for yourself and others this holy season by cleaning up your home's water supply. Who cares if your kitchen has granite countertops when your kitchen faucet is compromising your family's internal plumbing?

Susan Wadia-Ells, a long time wellness advocate, with graduate degrees in politics, energy economics and women studies, is founding director of the national non profit organization, Know Breast Cancer www.knowbreastcancer.net. She also writes the blog www.thetruthaboutbreastcancer.com .

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