

TAP WATER IS BETTER

Practice at risk of being overused, as indicated by the ISDE - International Society of Doctors for the Environment

Today it is estimated that 38 million Italians drink bottled water, with an average consumption of over 220 litres of mineral water per person every year. That totals to around 11 billion plastic bottles per year. It is better to choose tap water, which is indeed just as good, safe and tested. In fact, bottled water is not necessarily healthier or without its drawbacks, as many tend to believe.

LET'S UNDERSTAND WHY

Water from public aqueducts undergoes regular quality checks and possesses the same chemical composition, taste characteristics, smell, and colour as water sold in a bottle. The tests, regulated by law, are frequent and comprehensive. They begin with a check of the groundwater undertaken by environmental agencies (Arpa), followed by internal checks by the aqueduct operator and independent checks by the local health authorities.

The law governs the precise physical, chemical and microbiological characteristics of drinking water. Guide values are established for its level of hardness (amount of calcium) and limits are set for the maximum concentration of various substances, such as: chlorides, sulphates, nitrates, nitrites, sodium, arsenic, benzene, chromium, lead, nickel, pesticides, polycyclic

aromatic hydrocarbons, tetrachloroethylene, trichloroethylene, and trihalomethanes. Even bottled water undergoes these tests, as required by law, but should not automatically be considered healthier. Its chemical characteristics also depend on its hydrogeological origin, which may result in



a composition that is generally unsuitable or unsuitable only for those in certain phases of life (for example, for children or women going through menopause). Mineral water, however, may have problems related to the fact that it is kept in plastic bottles for months. The bottle plastic (usually PET) may actually give way to toxic substances if exposed for a prolonged period to sources of heat. Furthermore, plastic bottles may be permeable to possible solvents or to hydrocarbonic substances present in the air of places where the bottles are stored. Finally, pollution of underground aquifers may also affect mineral water sources. Not all water sources are at high altitude and, therefore, they are no less exposed to contamination than groundwater destined for the aqueducts. That said, the consumption of bottled water is most problematic from an environmental point of view, as it leads to an increase in the already difficult problem of plastic recycling. Added to this is the environmental impact deriving from the transportation of bottles, usually by road and therefore causing pollution.

WHEN IT MAY BE ADVISABLE

Only upon doctor's orders, in the presence of proven disorders requiring a certain type of water, may it be advisable to resort to bottled water.

To learn more:

www.altroconsumo.it/analisi-acqua

Project "Doing more does not mean doing better - Choosing Wisely Italy"

www.slowmedicine.it

www.choosingwiselyitaly.org

DOUBTS ABOUT DRINKING WATER? ADVICE FROM ALTROCONSUMO



- If you have health problems, don't decide on your own that you need water other than tap water and don't let yourself be influenced by advertising. For specific health disorders, ask your doctor if bottled water is preferable.
- If the problem is the taste, for example the hint of chlorine, you can leave the water in a pitcher in the fridge for around 30 minutes before drinking it. If there are other problems, you can get a water filter pitcher. We tested them on "Altroconsumo Inchieste 338", July 2019.
- If you like sparkling water, you can get a carbonation device. We tested them on "Altroconsumo Inchieste 338, July 2019". Or you may be able to obtain it from the water houses active in many municipalities.
- If you have doubts regarding the condition of water from your tap, you can have it analysed through our dedicated service. You can find all the information on: www.altroconsumo.it/analisi-acqua.
- If you do not want to give up mineral water, choose water in returnable glass bottles.