

Is Your Pet's Water Safe?

Exposing the truth about tap water toxicity and its impact on our furry friends. Learn what contaminants are often found in household water and how they affect your pet's health.

Reviewed by [Dr. Becker](#)

STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- If your water is unsafe to drink, it's unsafe for your pet, too
- This applies to all instances of contamination, including E. coli, when a boil order may be issued
- Simply turning on the tap to fill your dog's bowl could backfire, as more than 320 toxins have been detected in U.S. tap water
- Most tap water should be filtered prior to offering it to your pet; Use the best water filtration system you can afford
- Be sure to wash your pet's water dish daily and change his water at least once a day, if not more, to freshen it up and ensure it stays pure

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Dogs need, on average, about one ounce of water per pound of body weight per day.¹ But, just like you, they need pure water in order to be optimally healthy. This means if your water is unsafe to drink, it's unsafe for your dog too.

In addition to heavy metal and chemical contaminants, this also applies to protozoal and bacterial contamination, including E. coli, when a boil order may be issued.

In the case of bacterial contamination, give your dog the same boiled (and cooled) water the rest of your family is drinking or provide an alternative source of water temporarily, such as bottled water, to all family members, two and four legged.

For the long-term, however, even bottled water may contain contaminants that aren't ideal for your pet. The best solution is to provide a pure source of filtered water for your pet to access any time — and from there, consider adding in hydrogen for optimal health.

Contaminants Are Common in Tap Water

Your dog's body mass contains up to 75% water. It's needed to lubricate joints, detoxify the body and, as a primary element in blood, transport oxygen throughout tissues. Water is also necessary for your proper immune function, digestion and temperature control.²

Simply turning on the tap to fill your dog’s bowl could backfire, however. More than 320 toxins have been detected in U.S. tap water, according to an analysis by the Environmental Working Group (EWG). Arsenic, lead, radioactive materials, pesticides and per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) are among them.³

These chemicals are associated with chronic diseases such as cancer, brain impairment and more. Further, while the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency regulates more than 90 toxins in drinking water, there are countless others that are not regulated.

Even those chemicals that fall under regulatory scrutiny may exist at unsafe levels, according to EWG environmental health scientist Uloma Uche, because their “legal limits were set based on outdated science,” she told Environmental Health News.⁴ Medications may also be present. In an interview with water expert Paul Barattiero, he explained:

“People foolishly dump expired drugs into their toilet, because they were taught that that's the magic place, that whatever you put in there magically disappears and goes away to nowhere. And then there are also the medications the body doesn't utilize, which are eliminated through urination and defecation, and goes into the water system as well.”

You often can’t see or smell contaminants in your water. While your local water treatment plant should send out an annual report detailing the water quality in your area, it’s a good idea to also test your tap water each year to find out what types of contaminants it contains.

Use the Best Water Filter You Can Afford

If the water isn’t safe for you to drink, it’s not safe for your pet either and, ideally, most tap water should be filtered prior to offering it to your pet. Make sure to use the best water filtration system you can afford.

There are carbon filter pitchers, but they’re primarily designed to make the water taste better. Different types of carbon filters and activated carbon filters can remove other contaminants such as certain metals, paint thinners and VOCs.

Reverse osmosis filters remove more contaminants, though they take out most of the minerals along with them.

“Reverse osmosis is a very robust filter,” Barattiero said. “You're going to get down to 0.0001 micron, and so you've removed all metals, pesticides, and fluoride — not 100%, but most of it.”

Water that has gone through a reverse osmosis system retains about 10% to 15% of its original mineral content. Don’t give your pet distilled water, however, for regular use. While distilled water can be useful during periods of detoxification, it can have a mineral-leaching effect that’s harmful over time.

Many animals are already mineral deficient, and there are some negative consequences with animals’ ability to replenish their minerals when they’ve been drinking distilled water long-term.

Because different filters filter out different contaminants, find out what’s in your water by asking your municipality for the annual water report or having your water tested. Once you know what your contaminants are you can better choose the type of filter, and ultimately the brand of filtration that will be best for removing the contaminants in the water you and your pets are drinking.

Consider Hydrogen Water for Your Pet

Some pet guardians have experimented with alkaline water for their pets. This isn't typically recommended, as cats are obligate carnivores, and dogs are scavenging or opportunistic carnivores; their urine and saliva pH are naturally slightly acidic, not alkaline.

If you give your pet alkaline water, make sure to monitor their urine pH to make sure it's not becoming alkaline, which predisposes them to urinary tract infections and struvite crystals and bladder stones.

Hydrogen-enriched water, however, is a different story and beneficial for pets and their guardians alike. Hydrogen is a selective antioxidant, which scavenges reactive oxygen species. “I’m extremely passionate now about getting water into people that has hydrogen gas in it, regardless of the pH, because that's unimportant to the body and actually in some cases can harm people. It’s all about neutral pH and hydrogen,” Barattiero said.

This can be done by dropping hydrogen tablets into your pet’s water just before he drinks it, but the hydrogen will escape after about two hours. You can also use specialized machines that will not only remove contaminants from the water but also dissolve hydrogen in it.

Is Your Dog’s Water Bowl Clean?

Providing your pet with pure, filtered water is an essential part of health and wellness. If you want to add hydrogen, that’s even better. Pay attention, too, to the type of bowl you’re providing your pet’s water in — and its cleanliness. **Pet bowls** are among the germiest spots in a typical house.

If you don’t wash your pet’s water bowl regularly, it could grow harmful bacteria. Be sure to wash your pet’s water dish daily and allow it to dry thoroughly before refilling. You’ll want to change your pet’s water at least once a day, if not more, to freshen it up and ensure it stays pure.

Provide stainless steel, food-safe, high-grade porcelain or kitchen-safe glass water bowls for your pet, not plastic, which can be hard to sanitize. The plastic can also break down and leach toxic chemicals into your pet’s food water.

Look for the highest quality materials you can find — 18-gauge stainless steel that has gone through third-party purity testing, or Pyrex or Duraalex for glass bowls. By giving your pet this basic resource — pure water in a nontoxic bowl — you’re providing a solid foundation for optimal health.

Sources and References

¹ [Whole Dog Journal, November 1, 2022](#)
² [Whole Dog Journal, March 30, 2021](#)
^{3,4} [Environmental Health News, November 9, 2021](#)
