

# Bacteria Found in Bottled Mineral Water

Bottled Water May Not Be Safer Than Tap Water in Reducing Risk of Infection

By Jennifer Warner

Reviewed By Brunilda Nazario, MD

on Thursday, November 04, 2004

WebMD Medical News

Nov. 4, 2004 -- Choosing bottled mineral water over tap may not offer more protection against potentially hazardous bacteria, according to new research.

Dutch researchers sampled bottled mineral water from 16 countries, not including the U.S., and found about 40% of the samples showed evidence of contamination with either bacteria or fungi. In laboratory cultures, bacteria grew from 21 of the 68 samples.

Researchers say the high levels of bacterial contamination in commercially bottled mineral water may pose a health threat to certain people, such as children, the elderly, and those with weakened immune systems such as people with cancer, kidney failure requiring dialysis, diabetes, or AIDS.

The findings were presented this week at the Interscience Conference on Antimicrobial Agents and Chemotherapy in Washington, D.C.

## Bacteria found in bottled water, US

Researchers at Baylor College of Medicine discovered low levels of bacteria and other contaminants in several samples of bottled water purchased at area grocery stores.

The researchers were investigating the safety of using bottled water to rinse or store contact lenses.

Researchers tested 23 brands of bottled water. About 20 percent of the samples exceeded acceptable sanitation limits, according to criteria set by the US Food and Drug Administration and the US Environmental Protection Agency.

"Bottled water should not be used as a substitute for sterile solutions used in contact lens care," said Kirk Wilhelmus, the study's director and a professor of ophthalmology at Baylor's Cullen Eye Institute. "Contact lens wearers must follow a strict disinfection regimen to avoid serious eye infection."

Some of the bottled water tested in the study contained coliform bacteria, mold, amoebas and algae.

---

SOURCE: 44th Annual Interscience Conference on Antimicrobial Agents and Chemotherapy, Washington, D.C., Oct. 30-Nov. 2, 2004.