

# Tap VS. Bottled Water



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It's summer time, the time of year where everyone is trying to beat the heat. An important part of staying healthy in the summer is drinking ample amounts of water to stay hydrated. It also seems to be that time of year where refrigerators are stocked full of bottled water, but is bottled water really the best choice? Here is some food for thought regarding the cost of bottled water and the Greenville public water supply:

There are some benefits to bottled water. Bottled water is highly convenient, widely available, and packaged in highly transportable, individualized containers. Spending money on bottled water is a much healthier option than purchasing drinks high in sugar, like sodas and energy drinks. Yet, the true cost of bottled water can be found in the supply chain and the lasting effect that consumption of bottled water has on the environment.

Americans consume approximately 29 billion gallons of bottled water every year. It takes about 17 million gallons of crude oil to make this amount of plastic bottles, which is enough to keep a million cars on the road for a year. Following the creation of the bottles, they must be filled and packaged, then transported to a store to be sold. Every step of this process uses energy. The cost of the materials and process of bottling water means that a gallon of bottled water is equivalent in price to a gallon of gasoline. Though plastic bottles are highly recyclable, only about 15% of used water bottles are recycled annually. Most of the plastic from bottled water ends up in

landfills, oceans, or ecosystems.

The primary difference between bottled and tap water is the cost, both environmentally and economically. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) states, "if you drink your daily recommended 8 glasses of water per day from the tap, it will cost you about 50 cents per year. If you choose to drink it from water bottles, it can cost you up to \$1400 dollars." That's a difference of \$1399.50 annually!

One of the main reasons that people chose to drink bottled water is the taste. Luckily, Greenville's public water supply is ranked as one of the top five cities in the United States for cleanest water. The public water supply for the City of Greenville comes from three suppliers: the Table Rock Reservoir, North Saluda Reservoir, and Lake Keowee. The Greenville Water System governs operations at both the Table Rock and North Saluda reservoirs; these reservoirs are forested, highly protected areas with little contamination due to lack of development. Greenville's water won the "Best of the Best" taste test at a national conference in 2011.

It is important that you research the quality of the water that you are drinking, whether bottled or tap. Tap water quality is regulated by the EPA, while the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulates bottled water. The EPA releases annual reports about water sources and contamination. Stay informed about Greenville's water supply by reading the annual water quality report.

A great way to reduce the pollution, energy use, and waste caused by bottled water consumption is to make a different choice and use a reusable bottle. You will protect our environment, save money, and stay hydrated all summer long!