In the United States, we enjoy one of the best supplies of drinking water in the world. However, many of us give little or no thought to the water that we drink every day. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is responsible for ensuring the safety of our drinking water. EPA sets national standards for drinking water and works with state and local governments to ensure that public water systems meet these standards. Public water systems serve more than 90% of U.S. residents and provide safe drinking water to more than 281 million people.

To protect drinking water, EPA has established regulations for the most common drinking water contaminants and for some rare and unusual contaminants. These regulations are called Maximum Contaminant Levels (MCLs). Drinking water utilities are required to monitor for these contaminants, and if the levels are above the MCLs, they are required to notify the public and must take steps to reduce the contaminant levels.

Importantly, consumers can also play a role in protecting their drinking water. For example, you can:

- Help protect your drinking water by maintaining the safety of your own water source:
  - Use a water filtration system to reduce contaminants in your water.
  - Use a water softener to reduce hardness in your water.
  - Use a water treatment system to reduce other contaminants in your water.
- Help protect your drinking water by protecting your source water:
  - Maintain the safety of your own water source.
  - Help protect your source water by reporting any pollution to your local health department.
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There are many actions you can take to help protect your drinking water. For more information, visit the Drinking Water Protection section of this website.
Drinking water is important to all of us. We cannot survive without it, and we expect it to be there when we need it. Daily, hundreds of people work to keep your drinking water safe and available to you. These public health providers work together to treat, monitor, and deliver tap water.

Consumers often have questions about their drinking water and relay those to EPA through our contact us page or by calling our Safe Drinking Water Hotline.

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Here are some of the popular subject areas requested:

- **Water on Tap**
  A general guide for consumers that explains how drinking water is regulated by EPA and the states, protected from natural and manmade threats, and how it gets from source to tap.

- **National Primary Drinking Water Regulations**
  These were put in place to protect public health and must be met by all public water systems.

- **Consumer Confidence Reports (Water Quality Reports)**
  For most people, by July 1 each year, a snapshot of your drinking water quality is delivered by your water supplier.

- **Private Wells**
  Not regulated by EPA, these household wells rely on their owners to keep them safe from contamination. Learn more about what you can do to protect your family’s health.

Learn more about what this involves and how you can help:

- **Source Water Protection**
  One of the most important aspects of safe drinking water is the protection of both ground water and surface water sources. It is much easier to protect a source than to treat it after contamination occurs.

- **Water Treatment**
  This step-by-step virtual tour of a water treatment plant explains how water is treated and delivered to your home or business.

- **Emergency Preparedness**
  When an emergency situation occurs, we must be prepared. Information is available on emergency disinfection of drinking water and/or the proper treatment of a well or acetic acid after a flood.

- **School and Child Care Facilities**
  Drinking water quality at a school or child care facility is very important because it may be the primary source of your child’s daily intake of this vital fluid.

- **Home Water Testing**
  Many people, especially those with a private well, may want to have their tap water tested. EPA recommends that a certified drinking water laboratory perform those tests.

- **Safe Drinking Water Act**
  Passed in 1974, this law ensures the quality of Americans’ drinking water. Under this authority, EPA sets standards for drinking water quality, and oversees the states, localities, and water suppliers who implement those standards. It also provides for the safe injection of fluids underground for storage or disposal.