

# Critic warns of water hazards

March 21, 2007

**ERIN KOBAYASHI**  
LIFE WRITER

Two years ago, Pam Killeen saw David Suzuki speak at the Total Health Show in Toronto. She remembers Suzuki being upset when a bottle of water was given to him. Killeen, a bottled water drinker for years, began to question why she spent money on something that seemed to offer her little in return.

As part of World Water Day, Killeen speaks tomorrow night at Conspiracy Culture, a shop at 1696 Queen St. W. The *Star* interviewed Killeen by telephone from her home in London, Ont. She is a consumer health advocate and co-author of the *New York Times* bestseller *The Great Bird Flu Hoax*.

What are the dangers of drinking bottled water?

One is the plastic and how the plastic affects the environment and takes up landfills. Secondly, how the plastic is leaching out of the bottle into human water and what are the effects on human health after a consumer drinks that water. Another element that ties into the environment is the draining of the aquifers (groundwater sources). Water is a very precious resource ...

Why do consumers drink bottled water?

They are interested in bottled water because they are interested in a better tasting water, better quality water and purity. A lot of them drink bottled water because they are trying to avoid the problems that are associated in city water. They are trying to avoid contaminants in city water. Ironically, in avoiding the contaminants that may occur in city water, they are potentially taking in contaminants in bottled water.

What contaminants are in bottled water?

There (have) been studies done that have found levels of arsenic, mercury and even E. coli in bottled water. I am sure there are similar elements that can be found in tap water. The irony is that people are paying \$2 for bottled water, whereas the equivalent amount of city water would cost 1/800th of a penny to fill that bottle. There are potential chemicals in the water that consumers could potentially pick up and may cause hormonal effects in the body. The Number 7 bottle – the colourful bottles you find in athletic stores – has an ingredient called bisphenol A, and some scientists say that mimics the estrogen in the body and acts like a potential birth control pill in the body.

What are the differences between the numbers from 1 to 7 on the bottom of the bottles?

The most common number you will find on bottled water is Number 1. Number 1 means one use only, in a sense. The concern about the Number 1 plastic is not only do they take up our landfill sites, but they can accumulate a lot of bacteria. If you reuse Number 1s, you have to clean them out with soap and water to clean them out really well. Number 2, 4 and 5 are the "safer" plastics. The ones that you should avoid according to my research are Number 1, 3, 6 and 7.

How much does the bottled water industry spend on marketing?

Coke, Nestlé and Pepsi are spending tens of millions of dollars every year to undermine people's confidence in tap water. The regulation of tap water is much better and (more) efficient than the bottled water industry. The Canadian Food Inspection Agency only checks the bottling water plants every 12 to 18 months.

The media are encouraging people to eat locally. Do you encourage people to drink locally?

There is a restaurant critic, Giles Coren from the *Times of London*, who is penalizing restaurants that offer sexy, new mineral waters. As a food critic and supporter of local, sustainable food, if he goes into a restaurant and they come out with water that comes from thousands of miles away, he will penalize that restaurant. ... He will support bottled water from a spring that is closer to him in the area of London, England. In Canada, we support Evian water that travels thousands of miles to get here. It also contributes to global warming.

What steps can individual consumers take?

Look for alternative containers and clean your containers to avoid contamination. I drink filtered water because I don't like the chlorine and the fluoride. Buy a high-quality filter and do research about what you want to avoid ... Now, medication traces like psychiatric drugs and birth control pills are showing up in tap water. I also found a stainless steel canteen that I carry my water in. I feel like I'm going back to cowboy days.

---

*Only 35 seats are available for Killeen's talk. Tickets cost \$5. For more information, see [conspiraculture.com](http://www.conspiraculture.com).*

<http://www.thestar.com/living/article/194088>