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Drinking Water Fact Kit

Frequently Asked Questions About Water Treatment

NSF International is an independent, not-for-profit public health organization that writes public health standards for food, water and consumer products. NSF also tests and certifies products to make sure they meet these standards. NSF has a 65-year history of protecting public health, safety and environment worldwide and is a World Health Organization Collaborating Centre for Food and Water Safety and Indoor Environment. NSF developed the American national public health standards for materials and products coming into contact with drinking water and all chemicals used to treat drinking water.

NSF has also developed nationally recognized standards for drinking water treatment products including, carbon filters, reverse osmosis systems, ultraviolet systems, distillers, shower filters, and water softeners. In general, the units help consumers who are concerned about health effects and aesthetics (chlorine, taste and smell), and to make sure the products work as claimed.

Are water treatment systems regulated?
The federal government does not currently require home water treatment systems to be tested or prove effectiveness. A few states have adopted laws to regulate the sale of residential water treatment devices within their borders.

Which drinking water treatment systems are the best?
No systems can protect the user against all contaminants. Even among products that use the same technology, performance capabilities can vary from one unit to the next. As a result, it is important for consumers to identify what contaminants they wish to treat before shopping for a water treatment system.

How can I find out what's in my water?
If your home is on a public water supply, contact the local water utility to request a copy of their annual water quality report. Individuals with private wells may be able to obtain information about local water quality conditions from their local health department. They may also have a list of certified drinking water laboratories in case water testing is needed.

Certification helps ensure a system is effective at reducing the contaminants promised by the manufacturer.

If a product is certified to a NSF/ANSI Standard, does that mean it reduces all contaminants under that standard?
No. Some products may only be tested for material safety, while others may be tested for both material safety and performance. In addition, the number of performance claims validated for each unit can vary.

Several certification marks appear on a company's literature. Does it mean all of the company's products were certified?
Not necessarily. Ask to see a sample of the system being offered to you and inspect it to see if any certification marks are present. Also be sure to inspect the unit when it is being installed in your home to verify that it also displays the same certification mark and matches the certified product model number.

Ask the seller for the name and phone number of the testing organization, and contact them to verify the unit you are purchasing is truly certified.

To view a list of common contaminants that can be found in public and private drinking water supplies, visit **www.nsf.org/consumer/drinking_water/dw_contaminant_guide.asp.**

For additional information, please visit **www.nsf.org/consumer/water.**

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