



Q: Is Distilled Water Dangerous?

"Is drinking distilled water dangerous? I've read that it's harmful because distilled water easily becomes acidic and supposedly robs the body of important minerals. True?"

-- Joe Pietron

DR. WEIL'S ANSWER

A: (Published 12/19/2001)

First of all, let me review for the record what distilled water is — it's water that has been turned into steam so its impurities are left behind. The steam is then condensed to make pure water. The process of distillation kills and removes virtually all bacteria, viruses, heavy metals, and other organic and inorganic contaminants. Once distilled, the water is as pure as water can reasonably be.

For reasons I don't understand, any number of myths — some quite extreme — have grown up over the years about distilled water. A quick Internet search today will take you to sites that put forth such views as "distilled water leads to early death." Nonsense. One claim holds that distillation removes all of water's beneficial minerals. While it's true that distillation removes minerals as well as various contaminants from water, we don't know that the human body can readily absorb minerals from water. We get our minerals from food, not water. By one manufacturer's estimate, you would have to drink 676 eight-ounce glasses of tap water in Boston to reach the RDA for calcium.

Your question as to whether distilled water leaches minerals out of the body reflects another persistent myth. While pure water helps to remove minerals from the body that cells have eliminated or not used, it does not "leach" out minerals that have become part of your body's cell structure. Neither does distilled water cause your teeth to deteriorate, a false claim made by a filter manufacturer looking to boost sales. As far as acidity goes, distilled water is close to a neutral pH and has no effect on the body's acid/base balance.

I hope I've set your mind at ease. Distilled water not only isn't dangerous, it's the purest form of water. It's also the kind of water I drink.

Dr. Andrew Weil