

THE GreenGUIDE

environmental change begins at home.

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Plastic Water Bottles

by P.W. McRandle

Whether you buy bottled water or conscientiously tote some from home, you'll want to avoid swallowing chemicals along with it. Particularly for small children, whose bodies are developing, it's best to steer clear of plastics that can release chemicals that could harm them in the long term. Below, the plastics not to choose (check the recycling number on the bottom of your bottle) and those that are safer:

Plastics to Avoid

#3 Polyvinyl Chloride (PVC) commonly contains di-2-ethylhexyl phthalate (DEHP), an endocrine disruptor and probable human carcinogen, as a softener.

#6 Polystyrene (PS) may leach styrene, a possible endocrine disruptor and human carcinogen, into water and food.

#7 Polycarbonate contains the hormone disruptor bisphenol-A, which can leach out as bottles age, are heated or exposed to acidic solutions. Unfortunately, #7 is used in most baby bottles and five-gallon water jugs and in many reusable sports bottles.

Better Plastics

#1 polyethylene terephthalate (PET or PETE), the most common and easily recycled plastic for bottled water and soft drinks, has also been considered the most safe. However, one 2003 Italian study found that the amount of DEHP in bottled spring water increased after 9 months of storage in a PET bottle.

#2 High Density Polyethylene

#4 Low Density Polyethylene

#5 Polypropylene

Best Reusable Bottles: Betras USA Sports Bottles, Brita Fill & Go Water Filtration Bottle, Arrow Canteen

Better Baby Bottles: Choose tempered glass or opaque plastic made of polypropylene (#5) or polyethylene (#1), which do not contain bisphenol-A.

Tips for Use:

*Sniff and Taste: If there's a hint of plastic in your water, don't drink it.

*Keep bottled water away from heat, which promotes leaching of chemicals.

*Use bottled water quickly, as chemicals may migrate from plastic during storage. Ask retailers how long water has been on their shelves, and don't buy if it's been months.

*Do not reuse bottles intended for single use. Reused water bottles also make good breeding grounds for bacteria.

*Choose rigid, reusable containers or, for hot/acidic liquids, thermoses with stainless steel or ceramic interiors.

For more info, see Product Reports on "[bottled water](#)" and "[baby bottles](#)."

Smart Shopper's Plastic Picks Card

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