

KEEPING OUR WATERS CLEAN AND SAFE

Access to clean water is crucial for the health of the public. Whether you use it for drinking, food preparation, personal and domestic hygiene, growing food, income generation or recreational activities, it plays a vital role in keeping us healthy and safe. However, people living in under-resourced settings often have limited access to clean water and sanitation. Vulnerable groups such as children, the elderly and those with pre-existing ill health conditions are at an increased risk of water-related illnesses.



Where do harmful substances in drinking water come from?

- Germs from human and animal waste may contaminate water because of poorly designed, damaged or poorly maintained water supply infrastructure or storage systems.
- Inadequate treatment of wastewater may lead to contamination of rivers, lakes and wetlands, which are sometimes used as sources of drinking water.
- Improper disposal of solid and other waste from industries, farms or homes may result in water contamination.
- Pollution from solid waste, wastewater and chemical sources may lead to significant human and animal exposure to harmful germs and chemicals (such as pharmaceuticals, pesticides and industrial "forever chemicals") in drinking water.

as cholera and typhoid fever, neurological and hormonal disorders, and increased cancer risks

- People may experience symptoms such as stomach pain, vomiting, diarrhea, headache, fever, or kidney failure.



Ways in which we can keep ourselves, and our families safe:

- Regularly washing hands, especially after using the toilet
- Practicing good hygiene when preparing food
- Do not throw rubbish or chemicals into rivers, lakes or oceans
- Cleaning chemically polluted water requires advanced methods not available at most homes. So, it is important to protect our water sources against harmful substances.



People may be exposed to germs and chemicals by:

- Drinking contaminated water
- Eating food prepared with, or grown, using contaminated water
- Playing or exercising in contaminated water
- Using unsafe water for personal and domestic hygiene purposes

For more information on water contamination, water-related illnesses and protective measures visit the following links:

www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/drinking-water;

www.epa.gov/report-environment/drinking-water

www.cdc.gov/healthywater/drinking/contamination.html

www.nicd.ac.za/water-cuts-in-south-africa-are-hurting-hospitals-and-clinics-theres-an-increased-risk-of-infections/



What happens when you drink contaminated water?

- Drinking water contaminated with harmful germs and chemicals may lead to health problems such

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