

WATER, WATER EVERYWHERE

Options in Water Filtration

BY ELIZABETH EIDLITZ

“Thousands have lived without love, not one without water,” wrote the poet W.H. Auden; yet there are invisible things in your water that should not be there. Scientists estimate that each year up to 7 million Americans become sick from contaminated tap water.



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Silent Spring researcher Laurel Schaidler wonders whether unregulated chemicals in wastewater streams are “causing or related to elevated rates of breast cancer, which historically has had a 20 percent higher incidence on the Cape than in the rest of the state.”

“We lived for 30 years in New Hampshire and didn’t have neighbors dying of cancer,” say Carol and Nicholas Vervens of West Falmouth, who are seriously concerned about the quality of Cape Cod water.

Moreover, as Falmouth and Barnstable residents know, high counts of E. coli bacteria in town water last summer resulted in frustrating boil water alerts until contaminated water tested clean for two consecutive days.

What’s the alternative to filling water jugs at Pristine Spring water kiosks in Falmouth and Cataumet or using boiled water to wash fruits and vegetables, brush your teeth, fill the pet’s bowl, shower with your mouth and nose closed, or make ice cubes, coffee, tea, or baby formula?

“E. coli bacteria can happen anywhere but have been commonly found in recreational waters and are harbored in all warm-blooded animals,” birds and mammals alike, notes William Chapman, Falmouth water superintendent.

Point-of-use systems are small, compact filters that clean and purify the water at a single source, typically under a kitchen or bathroom sink.

“Through chlorination, we knock out E. coli in Long Pond, which provides over 50 percent of the town’s water, but resident filtration systems would minimize the need for chlorination and improve the taste of drinking water,” he said.

A state-of-the-art water filtration plant is being constructed for the Crooked Pond Well. This facility will provide advanced water purification for 2.5 million gallons of water per day. Similar facilities are

planned for existing and future water supply sources in order to provide the absolute best quality water possible.

AquaSafe of Cape Cod, whose sales have increased since the boil alerts, according to Mary-Ellen Donald, company representative, has a wide range of technologically advanced home filtration systems to purify the water that flows from your tap, keeping it clear and healthy, and safe for all its many uses. Most systems use the reverse osmosis method to eliminate more than 99 percent of chemicals and particulates in your water, whether it comes from the municipal water supply or a private well.

Proven designs range from “point-of-use” systems that clean the water from a single faucet to “whole house” solutions.

Point-of-use systems are small, compact filters that clean and purify the water at a single source, typically under a kitchen or bathroom sink.

For do-it-yourselfers, the Kwik-Change, a four-stage reverse osmosis system that produces up to 60 gallons of water daily, removes particulates, impurities, chlorine taste, and odor. It features fast changeable filter cartridges, replaced with an easy twist, that keep the system working at peak efficiency.

Prices, excluding installation costs, range from \$199 for the two-stage Purifier2 to \$399 for the state-of-the-art Watts premier WP-4V, a four-stage point-of-use drinking water treatment system.

In the WP-4V system, incoming water first passes through a sediment filter to remove particulate matter, such as rust and silt, and then through a carbon filter to remove chlorine or other contaminants. The third stage of treatment,

the reverse osmosis membrane, removes a wide variety of inorganic and larger molecular weight organic contaminants, as well as protozoan cysts, such as cryptosporidium and giardia. Treated water is stored in a three-gallon storage tank. Upon leaving the storage tank, the water passes through a second carbon filter to remove volatile organic compounds and other taste and odor-causing substances before dispensing through the faucet.

Certified by the EPA’s Environmental Technology Verification (ETV) program, funded by Homeland Security and National Sanitation Foundation (NSF), an independent not-for-profit organization, the WP-4V was found to reduce all of the challenge chemicals 98 percent or more.

All point-of-use systems can be rented. The price, ranging from \$24.99 through \$34.99 monthly, includes installation and six months of maintenance, replacement, and sanitizing of the system by one of AquaSafe’s licensed plumbers.

Whole house systems, while still compact and unobtrusive, are large enough to filter all of the water that enters your home.

The NSF-certified whole house water filter is installed at the point of entry and treats all water, whether from a municipal source or a private well. Filtration reduces sediment and other particulate matter, extending the life of reverse osmosis units, water heaters, and appliances. Clear housing makes it easy to see when the filter needs to be changed.

As with all filtration systems, regular maintenance is critical.

Since it raises the pH (acidity) of water to safe levels by filtering it through an easy-to-maintain limestone media bed, the NSF-certified acid neutralizer helps to inhibit corrosion of copper pipes and lead solder joints and to prevent blue/green stains and pitted fixtures caused by corrosion. The acidic water is neutralized as it slowly dissolves the media, thus automatically raising the pH level.

Its design greatly reduces the potential caking of the media and requires no electricity, backwashing, or a drain.

AquaSafe also offers an ultraviolet light system, which disinfects without chemicals. Independent lab test results indicate 99.1 to 99.9 percent reduction of E. coli bacteria.



To help you choose the system that best meets your needs, AquaSafe conducts a free home water purity test, which can be scheduled by phone or online.

During the home visit, water technicians will draw samples from your kitchen and bathroom taps. AquaSafe then performs a thorough chemical and spectrographic analysis to provide you with a comprehensive analysis of what is in your home’s water.

Private well owners concerned about their drinking water can purchase a routine well analysis package for \$30, which looks at the common contaminants including coliform bacteria, pH, conductivity, iron, copper, sodium, and nitrate from sources such as septic systems, from board of health offices in Brewster, Eastham, Falmouth, Mashpee, and Wellfleet. Free sampling bottles are available at pickup sites, or at the Barnstable County Water Quality Laboratory.

Before they knew of AquaSafe, the Vervens’ plumber put in a big filter in the cellar. When it clogged within a week, the couple decided to upgrade by renting a system with a carbon

component from AquaSafe for \$29.95 a month.

Having the filtration system makes the Vervens feel safer when they cook their vegetables. They find the upgrade has made a big difference to the taste of the water. “We didn’t like the chlorine smell before,” says Carol Vervens, “and during the boil water alert our dog, who has a high IQ, refused to drink it.”

After boiling water during the E. coli outbreak, Pat and Brad Shufelt of North Falmouth chose to have the WP4-V and an UV disinfection system installed on the recommendation of AquaSafe. “They’re a good local company,” according to Pat Shufelt, who concurs with the Vervens: “Now our water tastes wonderful, really refreshing, and we don’t need to buy bottled water any more.”

Whether you choose to have a company install a whole house water filtration system or purchase and install your own under-the-sink variety, knowing that your water is being filtered may provide peace of mind in the wake of this summer’s water quality alerts. 🌿