

# Drinking Water and Your Health

**Guidelines for preparation of this report require that water agencies use the following language to discuss the sources and types of contamination in drinking water:**

**DRINKING WATER, INCLUDING BOTTLED WATER, MAY REASONABLY BE EXPECTED**

to contain at least small amounts of some contaminants. The presence of contaminants does not necessarily indicate that the water poses a health risk. More information about contaminants and potential health effects can be obtained by calling the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (USEPA) Safe Drinking Water Hotline at (800) 426-4791 or visiting their Web site at [www.epa.gov/safewater/](http://www.epa.gov/safewater/).

The sources of drinking water (both tap water and bottled water) include rivers, lakes, streams, ponds, reservoirs, springs, and wells. As water travels over the surface of the land or through the ground, it dissolves naturally-occurring minerals and, in some cases, radioactive materials, and can pick up substances resulting from the presence of animals or from human activities.

**Contaminants that may be present in source water include:**

**Microbial contaminants**, such as viruses, bacteria and protozoa that may come from sewage treatment plant discharges, septic systems, agricultural livestock operations and wildlife

**Inorganic contaminants**, such as salts and metals, that can be naturally-occurring or come from urban stormwater runoff, industrial or domestic wastewater discharges, oil and gas production, mining or farming

**Pesticides and herbicides** that may come from a variety of sources such as agriculture, urban stormwater runoff, and residential uses

**Organic chemical contaminants**, including synthetic and volatile organic chemicals that are byproducts of industrial processes and petroleum production, and can also come from gas stations, urban stormwater runoff, agricultural application, and septic systems

**Radioactive contaminants**, which can be naturally-occurring or be the result of oil and gas production and mining activities

In order to ensure that tap water is safe to drink, USEPA and the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) prescribe regulations that limit the amounts of certain contaminants in water provided by public water systems. CDPH and U.S. Food and Drug Administration regulations establish limits for contaminants in bottled water that provide the same protection for public health.

