



Keeping Your Reusable Water Bottle Clean

By Chris Wiant, M.P.H., Ph.D.

The reusable water bottle is one of those “grab and go” items that travel with many of us on a daily basis. The filled water bottle provides a handy means of hydrating on the spot. As we’ve noted, many water fountains [now conveniently include water bottle-filling features](#). There’s just one caveat to deriving the maximum health benefit from reusable water bottles: They should be thoroughly cleaned and sanitized on a regular basis to avoid contamination.

Germs Love Moist Environments

Germs thrive in moist environments such as parts of the cap and interior of your water bottle. As Dr. Charles Gerba of the University of Arizona [notes](#), if you use your fingers to open and close the water bottle cap, there is a good chance that bacteria will be introduced into the cap, where moisture will support its growth. This is yet another reason for [appropriate hand hygiene](#), but we recognize washing your hands before using a water bottle is usually not possible. Perhaps these situations call for portable hand sanitizer use?



Louisville Water Company promotes filling reusable water bottles with tap water

[According to Gerba](#), although germs from your mouth transferred by backwash into your water bottle will not harm you, germs from someone sharing your water bottle can make you sick. And if your water bottle buddy is opening the bottle with his or her own hands, well, there’s another opportunity for contaminating the bottle.

Water Bottle Maintenance

It simply won’t do to refill your water bottle day after day without a regular maintenance plan. Here are some suggestions to help keep it sanitized:

- Open and run top and container body through the dishwasher (if dishwasher-safe)
- Wash components with soapy water and then sanitize with a dilute solution of bleach. To mix up a sanitizing solution, add **1/2 teaspoon of 8.25%** bleach to one quart (4 cups) of water (or **1/4 tablespoon of 5.25%** bleach to one quart of water); allow water bottle parts to remain in contact with the solution for two minutes, and then rinse
- Use dedicated water bottle cleansing tablets purchased online or at sporting goods and camping supply stores

Reusable water bottles have become part of our everyday gear. Get the maximum health benefit from their use by keeping them clean and sanitized!

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