

Different kinds of water and tips on which one you need to drink now

Don't be confused by all the labels slapped on water bottles, some of them really are better than others

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Water is an essential part of life and there are now so many varieties to choose from. The laywoman might not understand the fancy terms used to describe such drinks, so we've brought in the experts to give us the lowdown on what they are and if you should be drinking them.

1. Tap Water

Some people call it bland and boring but there's no justification for its bad rep. And we are fortunate to live in a country where tap water is easily accessible and is safe to drink straight from the tap.

"Water is an important part of our diet," says Bibi Chia, Principal Dietician, Raffles Diabetes and Endocrine Centre. "But we don't get our nutrients typically from tap water because the mineral content is minimal. Hence the benefits are from drinking water alone and not its nutrient content."

"Tap water in Singapore has fluoride added to it, which helps prevent tooth decay," explains Jaclyn Reutens, Dietician, Aptima Nutrition & Sports Consultants. "Bottled or distilled water doesn't contain fluoride. The sole purpose of water should be to keep us alive because it hydrates us; the nutritional factor is irrelevant. As long as the water we choose to drink has been treated to remove impurities and

bacteria, that type of water is safe for us. In Singapore, all tap water and bottled water are safe for consumption from a contaminants perspective.”

2. Mineral Water

There are a plethora of brands in the market now and some consider it trendy to drink this instead of tap water. “Mineral water contains minerals such as calcium and magnesium and trace elements such as boron that originated from its source,” explains Ms Reutens. “The amounts are negligible to make an impact on our health even if drunk in large quantities.”

And whether you consume the still or sparkling variety doesn't make a difference as they're the same nutritionally. “Sparkling water has carbon dioxide added to it which adds a fizz to the water, this is a good alternative for those who find drinking ‘plain’ water or still water boring,” says Ms Reutens. “For those who have digestive issues, sparkling water can cause discomfort through burping and bloatedness so they might have to avoid it.”

Ms Chia adds that the sodium content might be another problem with sparkling water. “In general, sparkling water tends to have more sodium than tap water. Do check the label and pick the one with lowest sodium content as our diet tends to provide us with enough sodium.”

3. Electrolyte-infused Water

This is most useful for preventing dehydration and is recommended before or after intense workouts. “The common electrolytes infused are sodium, potassium and magnesium,” Ms Reutens explains. “You get all these minerals from your diet too, so anything from water is just extra. Yes they are useful but only in situations where you perspire a lot and you need to replenish, such as exercise. Just ensure the ingredients are only electrolytes and water.

“Sports drinks are also considered electrolyte waters and they contain calories,” she continues. “They are safe to drink as long as you're engaging in a sport/exercise that requires quick replenishment. Do note that too much sports drinks can cause weight gain if you're not able to burn off the calories.”

4. Alkaline Water

It's been said that the higher pH level in alkaline water neutralises acid in your bloodstream and helps your body absorb nutrients easily. “There are some reported benefits for alkaline water but more studies are needed to confirm those claims,” says Ms Chia. “The body does a great job altering our pH and hence alkalising is not needed. For now I would say to stick to tap or bottled water.”

5. Vitamin-infused Water

Don't be duped by this drink as it's more harmful than beneficial. Ms Reutens explains: “This is a gimmicky water that is not only infused with vitamins, albeit in small and insignificant amounts, but is also laced with sugar. It's another variety of a sweetened beverage that should be drunk in moderation.”

6. Distilled Water

This refers to water that has been put through the distillation process, where the water is boiled to 100 degrees Celsius and the steam is collected as water. “It's safe to drink distilled water meant for drinking; in fact, it's more ‘pure’ than tap or mineral water,” says Ms Chia. “This also means that most of the beneficial minerals are no longer present. I wouldn't suggest to have distilled water as the main and only source of water.”

7. Natural Spring Water

It comes from an underground water spring and it does contain minerals. This type of water is usually tested and filtered, to ensure that it's safe for consumption. "It serves the purpose of hydration and has no negative side effects. As there are many options of water available, consumers should base their decision on cost, taste and the presence of calories," Ms Reutens concludes.