

A Precious Resource

Quality water is essential to life on Earth and must be protected from harmful pollutants. Help preserve the quality of your water by learning more about how water gets to you, and how you can keep it clean for generations to come.

WATER IS ESSENTIAL TO LIFE



- Water makes up most of our blood, lubricates our joints in arms and legs, helps us digest the food we eat, and rids our bodies of waste.
- We use water to grow food, provide power, control fires, and to heat and cool our homes and offices.
- We use water for recreation, such as fishing and swimming, and to beautify our environment.

Only 3% of the world's water is fresh water, and of this, 2/3 is stored in ice caps and glaciers. That leaves only 1% of the world's water available for drinking.

Nature's Water Cycle

The hydrologic cycle is nature's way of moving water to and from the earth. Since water is cleaned in this process, it is important that we do not upset this crucial balance.



Evaporation—The sun heats land and water surfaces, causing water to rise into the air as vapor.

Condensation—Water vapor condenses from a gas to a liquid, forming clouds that give us rain or snow.

Precipitation—Water falls back to earth as rain, snow, sleet, or hail. Some runs into rivers, lakes, and oceans, and some is absorbed by the soil or seeps into underground aquifers.

TWO SOURCES FOR FINDING FRESH WATER

1. **Surface Water**—Sources of fresh water found on the earth's surface include lakes, streams, rivers, ponds, and reservoirs.

2. **Groundwater**—Drinking water may be found in underground rock formations, caverns, and sand and gravel beds. We get this water from wells or natural springs. Groundwater is a valuable natural resource.

How Water Gets to You

Unless you get your water from a private well or water system, it probably comes to you from a large public water supply system, which involves the following steps:

1. WATER COLLECTION

The water is collected from surface sources such as lakes or rivers, or from groundwater basins.

2. STORAGE

Dams or reservoirs are built to ensure that supplies will be adequate.

3. TRANSMISSION

Pipes or special channels called aqueducts are used in some cases to transport water.

4. TREATMENT

Treatment facilities make our water safe to drink by removing contaminants, odors, and tastes.

5. DISTRIBUTION

Underground pipes carry cleaned water to your home, where it's available on demand.

