

PLAIN TALK ABOUT DRINKING WATER STORAGE

Have you ever wondered for how long can you “store” drinking water or if it is safe to store bottled water for prolonged periods or emergencies?

Here are some facts:

Can drinking water be stored in a container for a specific period?

If the drinking water was adequately treated and has residual disinfectant levels, the water can be stored in a closed container (plastic bottle with a cap, a glass container with a cap/lid, or metal container that is not prone to rust such as stainless-steel containers), indefinitely in a cool environment. When storing treated drinking water, the following must be kept in mind to ensure that the quality of the drinking water is not compromised during the storage:

- As soon as the seal (cap of plastic bottle, cap/lid of the glass/metal container) has been broken, water quality deterioration can occur as the residual disinfectant, needed to prevent microbiological re-growth, evaporates).
- The drinking water must be stored in a suitable container which over time, will not leach contaminants into the water.

What can cause the quality of stored drinking water to deteriorate?

- Certain plastic material can impart a unacceptable taste when chemical compounds that constitute the plastic, leach into the stored drinking water.
- The disinfection chemical that is in the water when stored, slowly evaporates and if the water is stored at high temperatures, micro-organisms will start growing in the bottle.



What can be recommended to avoid stored drinking water from becoming unsafe for use?

- To prevent the leaching of chemicals from plastic containers into the drinking water, store the filled plastic container in a cool place away from sunlight and not for extended periods.
- Reuse of single-use plastic bottles are not recommended as reused bottles may be contaminated with micro-organisms. Reusing the bottles may expose people to these unhealthy microorganisms.
- Studies has shown that storing drinking water at lower temperatures, such as refrigeration, can control micro-organisms from growing and multiplying in the stored drinking water.

Is it okay to store bottled water for a long time?

Bottled water is water sealed in a bottle or other container and are commercially sold. In case of emergencies, and sometimes for convenience, bottled water is a good source of drinking water. Bottled water can be stored for long periods if it was produced properly, stays unopened and is stored in a cool, dark place. It is advisable to not use bottled water after the expiry date as the taste / odour could have been affected.

