

Mineral or pure? Water way to go

One is flooded for choice when attempting to quench thirst

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HOW difficult it is to ask for a glass of water in a restaurant. The questions are numerous and the thirst is all but quenched. What is it about water then? The mineral variety or the bottled aqua? Do you want water at room temperature or do you prefer yours iced? For God's sake. Can one just have a glass of water, please?

Dieticians and nutritionists test the waters to explain its swirling depths, what is drinkable, and most importantly why. Dr Nupur J Krishnan, clinical nutritionist, Asian Heart Institute & Research Centre, says "the fuss about water is simply because it is a major constituent of the human body and accounts for 60 percent of the body weight. Not to forget that it plays a key role in elimination of body waste and in regulating body temperature."

But is that not part of conventional wisdom? "Not many people know that water should be had in moderate quantities and beverages in average amounts. Water, in no way, can be replaced with aerated beverages." So what should be the normal intake? "Around 1.5 to two litres should be enough but cardiac patients can have between 1.2 and 1.5 litres."

So what is the difference between the varieties of water that one is flooded? Dr Krishnan stresses, "mineral water is ideal, for it contains minerals which help in combating disease carrying agents. The fluorides it carries (.5 to .8 milligrammes per litre) makes it safe for consumption."

Which is the better choice — bottled



water or tap water? Says Purwa Duggal, chief dietician, Wockhardt Hospitals Ltd, Mumbai, "tap water is harmful and for those who prefer it, filtered or boiled would be a cheaper option. Tap water comes from lakes and rivers whereas bottled water, depending on its source, may be natural mineral, spring or purified water. Natural mineral water may have a more constant and desirable mineral com-

position than spring water. Whereas purified water may be drawn from lakes and rivers."

And is there a difference in taste too? "Quality and taste may be the two distinguishing characteristics," avers Duggal. Tap water is usually treated with chlorine to disinfect it. On the other hand bottled water is standardised — processed with the specific FDA quality standards for con-

tainants.

"But that alone does not make mineral water a better choice," Duggal cautions. "Contributory health benefits can be ascertained only when the label carries the typical mineral analysis to determine it is naturally wholesome," she says.

"Consumers associate bottled water with healthy living when it may actually be stored for longer periods as compared to tap water which is regularly distributed through pipes. Check the date of manufacture and the seal of the bottled water before purchasing. Retain the practice in restaurants as well," she further adds.

Finally, is there anything like 'pure water' at all? Or is it just a innovative marketing jargon?

Says Krishnan, "Pure water refers to water from the Himalayas. But is it pure anymore? How many of us would regard Gangajal pure? Water can be rendered safe by boiling it for 15 minutes for it kills disease carrying organisms and also removes the temporary hardness. But that alone cannot remove all the impurities and so chlorine tablets are added to disinfect the water."

Water on the rocks? Well, with ice that is. Iced water is safe provided the ice is made from boiled or mineral water, says Dr Krishnan. Boiled water is safe and so is mineral water, provided the latter is not an old packaged one.

But the ideal would be lukewarm water. "It stimulates our internal organs and acts as a detoxifying agent," Krishnan further adds. So which one would you prefer?

Ah.. flooded with choices again!