

Our Environment: Why Clean Water is Important

Water is a part of our everyday lives. Whether we're enjoying drinking a glass of water, watering our lawn or flowerbeds, or washing dishes or clothes, we go through a tremendous amount of water on a daily basis. In addition, we enjoy swimming in pools, lakes and oceans in a recreational setting.

Water is in the air we breathe and it's in the ground where we walk. Many times, when we feel hungry, our bodies are expressing not a desire for food, but rather a need for water. And because water is in our fruits, vegetables, meats, and even milk, we satisfy our body's need for water when we eat. A mere 2 percent drop in our body's water supply can trigger signs of dehydration: fuzzy short-term memory, trouble with basic math, and difficulty focusing on smaller print, such as a computer screen.

Through the hydrologic cycle, water is carried from the oceans, lakes, and streams via evaporation upward into the atmosphere. It is then returned in the form of rain. While the total amount of water on Earth remains relatively constant, the disbursement of this water changes from moment to moment. Water is constantly in motion.

Quite simply, water is the essential component of all life. It comprises 70 percent of the Earth's surface and 75 percent of the human body. Of that 70 percent of surface water, only 1 percent is actually drinkable. Water is needed to keep the ecosystem in balance. Clouds need water to make rain. Plants need water to grow. Animals depend on plants for the oxygen they produce and the food they provide. When one element of the chain is compromised, the entire system is thrown out of whack. Roughly 46 percent of America's lakes are too polluted for fishing, swimming or hosting aquatic life. Unfortunately, 1.2 trillion gallons of untreated sewage, storm water, and industrial waste are discharged into US waters annually.

There are many obvious reasons for us to protect our water supply, but the most important point to remember is that water is absolutely essential to all living things. Educate yourself, dedicate yourself and you can make a difference.