

# Why Do Children Drink Bottled Water?

*Beliefs that bottled water tastes better and is safer, cleaner, and more convenient were more common among black and Latino parents.*

Many parents choose bottled water over tap water for their children. To determine what factors affect this choice, researchers surveyed 639 parents (33% black, 33% Latino, and 33% non-Latino white) during visits to a pediatric emergency department in Wisconsin.

Black and Latino parents were significantly more likely than non-Latino white parents to give their children bottled water most or all of the time (52%, 46%, and 37% respectively). Beliefs that bottled water tastes better and is safer, cleaner, and more convenient than tap water were significantly associated with bottled water use; these beliefs were significantly more common among black and Latino parents. After adjusting for these beliefs and sources of information about water, race and ethnicity were no longer significantly associated with bottled water use. Parents who reported buying any bottled water spent an average of US\$23 monthly on the product. Physicians were an information source regarding water for 30% of parents.

**Comment:** Parental beliefs about the differences between bottled water and tap water drove the disparity in bottled water use in children from three racial and ethnic groups. Excess cost and water bottle waste aside, the main reason for children to drink tap water is that it usually is fluoridated (unlike bottled water), which promotes pediatric oral health. Pediatricians should ask what kind of water patients drink and be prepared to address parental beliefs about bottled water and the benefits of tap water.

— [Cornelius W. Van Niel, MD](#)

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