

## Healtheorium®

By Mimi Borger

*"Oil and water don't mix, but they have much in common."*

Years ago, young healthy looking men sprinted from gas station front offices, and in what appeared to be one quick movement, shoved the pump into the gas tank, checked the car's tire inflation, washed the windows, and presented the customer with the oil dip stick level for approval...all for a \$7.00 fill-up. Vending machines at the stations dispensed snacks and sodas, and sometimes a free cup of burnt coffee with a hint of motor oil taste. Then, during the late 1960's and '70's gas stations looking for higher profits changed from buildings with small bays for car repair and maintenance to convenience stores. Since gas stations weren't affected by "Blue Laws" (the laws dictating moral business practices and respect of the Sabbath) customers began to "Oh thank heaven for 7-Eleven." On Sunday's and evenings when grocery stores were closed, customers purchased loaves of bread, packs of cigarettes, and quarts of milk or other basics at these mini markets. Eventually gas station service went the way of consumer self-service and even the best dressed among us found ourselves pumping gas and checking motor oil.

During those same years, restaurant customers used to being presented with glasses of free iced water faced a new dilemma. The droughts of the 1970's created a need for water conservation. Restaurants were forced to reduce the water they served to water on request only. In 1976, when Perrier bottled water was introduced in the U.S., people suddenly had to make a dining choice. We could request free tap water, pay for bottled water, or buy a soda, juice, milk or other beverage. Many of us wondered why we should buy that which we could get for free.

However, over the next 30 years Americans consumed more and more bottled water. According to statistics found at the Website of the International Bottled Water Association ([Bottledwater.org](http://Bottledwater.org)), consumption in the United States rose from 354.3 million gallons per year in 1976 (or 1.6 gallons per capita) to approximately 8,267 million gallons in 2006 (more than 26 gallons pre capita.) Bottled water remains the number 2 beverage of choice behind carbonated soft drinks, which are consumed at about twice the rate. Still, U.S. consumption remains far behind several other countries including Italy and Mexico with 42 and 32 gallons per capita respectively.

Water is to the human body as oil is to a car. Water helps almost every part of the body function clean and efficiently. The brain and muscles are about 75% water, while blood is 92% water. It is required for breathing, digestion, regulation of body temperature, movement of nutrients and oxygen to all the cells of the body, and for waste removal. Water lubricates and cushions the joints.

To determine daily water need based on weight and exercise level, a hydration calculator (such as at Bottledwater.org) can be used. About 20% of water a person needs comes from foods, and the rest from beverages. For those wanting to improve nutrition and health, a good place to begin is by increasing plain water consumption. Plain drinking water can easily be substituted for a portion of other drinks normally consumed, especially sugary or artificially sweetened sodas, juices and waters. Adding a small amount of Vitamin C, such as a squeeze of lemon, neutralizes chlorine, boosts the immune system, and makes iron more available from food. It aids in the available absorption of calcium, and has numerous other health benefits.

In choosing bottled water, source and flavor should be considered. The bottle label will specify the source as spring water, mineral water, Artesian well, or even municipal water. Each has a distinct flavor and mineral content. Tap water treated with a filter (compressed carbon) removes heavy metals, chlorine and other impurities and leaves minerals such as calcium, magnesium, iodine, silicon and selenium. Fluorides and nitrates can be removed with a reverse osmosis water treatment unit. Reverse osmosis and the distilling processes remove minerals from the water, but a liquid mineral supplement added to the water can restore them.

Since gas stations no longer point out low oil levels and restaurants no longer automatically serve water, it's up to consumers to pay attention to their fluid levels and make responsible, healthy decisions. The wrong decisions could ruin their engines.

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