

12 MONTHS TO A HEALTHIER YOU

AUGUST TOPIC: AIR AND WATER



A note from me...



This month we are tackling two big issues that affect our health, air and water.

-
AIR: Many people are unaware that indoor air can be more polluted than the outdoor air! It's true, the US EPA has stated that indoor air can be as much as 110% worse than outdoor air!!

Why is the indoor air so bad, you may ask?? That's what this month is all about!

WATER: As a fundamental element for life its quality directly impacts our health and well-being. Tap water can contain many contaminants, including heavy metals, chlorine, pesticides, pharmaceutical residues, bacteria, PFAS chemicals, HDPEs and microplastics, yikes!

These pollutants can have adverse effects on our health, contributing to chronic illnesses and compromising our immune systems.

Air and Water are the topic of this months focus. Investing in systems to safeguard against constant exposures can be daunting and expensive.

I'll walk through the ways to safeguard your family...let's dive in!



Your mission, if you choose to accept: Invest in your health by adding an air purifier and water filtration system to your home.

Indoor Air Quality

Your overall health and wellbeing is impacted by the air you breath. When you inhale air into your lungs, you are exposing your body to everything that is contained in that air.

As you breathe, the air is absorbed into your blood stream through your lungs, where it travels throughout your body. For this reason having the cleanest air possible is important to the overall health of everyone in your home, including pets.

What is making your indoor air quality so bad?

The following are many ways but by no means an entire list of indoor air pollutants.

1. Air fresheners, candles, plug-ins, wax melts, spray deodorizers and anything else that is used to make the air smell better in your home.
2. Materials in your home that release particles into the air such as: stain resistant coatings on furniture and carpeting, paints, adhesives used in upholstered furnishings, formaldehyde from building materials, especially newer construction. Also, flame retardant coatings on upholstered furnishings and home electronics.
3. Dust and allergens are common pollutants, dust mites, pet dander, pollen and other airborne allergens.
4. Mold and mildew spores from humid indoor environments.
5. Pesticides and toxins that come into your home from shoes, busy roads, neighbors applying chemicals to their lawns, and from cleaning products used in your home.
6. Cigarette smoke is a significant source of indoor air pollution.
7. Exterior air pollution from busy roads, neighbors applying pesticides in their yard, nearby industrial facilities, environmental spills and accidents and wildfires.

Breathing poor quality indoor air can lead to and exacerbate a variety of health issues such as:

- 1. Respiratory Conditions:** Long-term exposure to indoor or outdoor air pollution can contribute to respiratory problems such as asthma, chronic bronchitis, and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD).
- 2. Cardiovascular Diseases:** Air pollution, particularly fine particulate matter and pollutants like nitrogen dioxide, can lead to inflammation and oxidative stress. Prolonged exposure to these pollutants is associated with an increased risk of heart diseases, including heart attacks, strokes, and hypertension.
- 3. Allergies and Sensitivities:** Indoor air pollutants like pet dander, dust mites, mold, and pollen can trigger allergic reactions in susceptible individuals. Continued exposure to these allergens may lead to chronic allergy symptoms and respiratory discomfort.
- 4. Lung Cancer:** Inhaling certain carcinogenic substances present in polluted air, such as radon, asbestos, and certain volatile organic compounds (VOCs), can increase the risk of developing lung cancer over time.
- 5. Neurological Issues:** Some airborne pollutants, such as lead particles and certain VOCs, have been linked to adverse neurological effects. Prolonged exposure to these pollutants may contribute to cognitive impairment, memory issues, decrease in IQ and developmental problems, particularly in children.
- 6. Skin Conditions:** Air pollution can also affect the skin, leading to skin irritation, allergies, and premature aging. Airborne particles and pollutants can clog pores, exacerbating skin conditions like acne and eczema.
- 7. Exacerbation of Pre-existing Conditions:** People with pre-existing health conditions, such as allergies, asthma, and cardiovascular issues, may experience worsening symptoms and increased health risks when exposed to polluted air.
- 8. Mental Health:** Some studies have suggested a link between air pollution and mental health issues. Living in areas with high pollution levels has been associated with increased stress, anxiety, and depression.
- 9. Transfer of Airborne illnesses:** When someone in the home comes down with a cold, influenza or even covid, having an air purification system with a HEPA filter will drastically cut down on the spread within the household.

Reducing your exposure to indoor and outdoor air pollutants by adding an air filtration system, proper ventilation, and minimizing the use of harmful chemicals can significantly improve indoor air quality and help mitigate the risk of developing these health-related illnesses.

Below are some changes you make to improve the air quality in your home:

- Open the windows on a regular basis to allow for adequate ventilation.
- Stop using products that are the main cause of poor quality indoor air such as: scented candles, air freshener sprays, plug-ins, wax melts, fragrant beads. These are a main source for adding toxins to your indoor air.
- Change your cleaning products to those containing less toxins and zero fragrance.
- The next time you are in the market for new upholstered furniture, choose a brand that does not use flame retardant and stain resistant coatings.
- When purchasing home electronics, always choose metal over plastic ones, they will not contain flame retardant coatings.
- Add an air purifier or filtration system, either to individual rooms or to the central furnace.

These steps will go a long way to support long term wellness, including better sleep, increased energy levels, improved cognitive function, and a more positive overall outlook.

For individuals who suffer from allergies and asthma, an air filtration system can be a game-changer.

Air filtration systems with activated carbon filters can effectively neutralize and eliminate unpleasant odors, such as cooking smells, pet odors, and smoke, the very reason for the use of most air fresheners.

Check out the last page for handy links to assist you in swaps and brands of air filtration systems that I recommend to my clients.



LEFT
EXPRESS LANES
DO NOT ENTER

LEFT
EXIT 165
Seneca St
EXIT ONLY

Madison St
Convention Center
EXIT ONLY

147

ONLY

Air Filtration

When looking at air filtration systems, there are systems for every budget. An important factor is finding one with a HEPA filter. This will filter out all of the particles, allergens, most viruses and bacteria that are floating in the air.

Have you ever looked out the window on a sunny day, you can see all the wee bits floating around...those are what gets filtered. You'll see SIGNIFICANTLY less of that!

Another great benefit from having an air filter/purifier system is that odors no longer linger in your home...no need for candles, plug-ins or any other air deodorizer. Just think of all the money you'll save!

Plus, can I tell you how much easier it is to breathe in my home? The difference is truly amazing, especially when sleeping! I really notice the difference when I'm not in my home or traveling, then it's really noticeable!

If you enjoy when your home has a nice aroma, switch to diffusing pure essential oils, not the ones from TJ Maxx or other big box stores, but pure oils that add beneficial aromatherapy to your home.

Since getting our air filtration system, everyone in my home has significantly been healthier, not as many flu or colds, we don't spread anything between us anymore, and my son's horrible allergies have dwindled to just having a few sniffles while he's at work.

I would steer away from ionic purifiers, unless that is the only system your budget can handle. They aren't great at filtering larger particles like VOCs, pollens, pet dander or odors.

Having a system that offers both carbon filters and HEPA filters are the best way to go. This is a list of systems that you can compare. Obviously, some these systems can get a bit pricey but, the investment, especially if you have anyone in your home with chronic illness, health symptoms, children or pets, is well worth preventing future long term health issues.



Straight up carbon filters are great for eliminating odors in your home without adding toxic fumes. These are affordable and can be placed everywhere throughout your home. My favorite brand is [Attitudes](#), their charcoal filters contain plant phenols that add a hint of freshness and their filters last several months.

While you're on their website, checkout their nontoxic personal care and home cleaning products, remember, using nontoxic products is a great way to improve the air quality in your home!!

[Honeywell Air](#): There are quite a few options here that are priced for lower budgets. I must confess, I don't know much about this brand, but they offer HEPA systems with many sizes to fit any room and home. Check to see if they have decibel readings, you want a quiet unit, especially in bedrooms.

[Blue Air](#) is a global company that has been around a while, they offer a great filtration system at an affordable price. They are sleek looking while being super quiet!!

[Air Doctor](#): I have two of these units in my home and I can truly say it has really changed our quality of life. (I've linked to another website that will give you a **45% discount** on an Airdoctor purchase).

[Austin Air](#): This is a top notch air purification/filtration system. If you have an HSA or FSA credit card, you can use it towards this purchase!!

[Dyson](#): They have a handy quiz to help you identify which unit is right for you. I find that their replacement filters are reasonably price.

[Levoit](#): Another good line that offers an app to run it while it also connects to alexa. They offer HEPA/ionic filtration systems that are quiet and sleek.

[IQAir](#) is like the Mercedes of air filters, dependable, powerful and thoroughly engineered. Their systems have built in VOC monitors with stand alone units so you can see how your air fluctuates based on when you open the door, your neighbor is spraying or grilling, you are cutting the grass and more. These are all factors that quickly ruin your indoor air.



Water Quality

The quality of the water in your home directly impacts your health and well-being along with everyone in your home, including pets.

Poor quality water can lead to a range of health issues, as it may contain various contaminants that can negatively impact the human body.

Here are some health issues that could be caused or exacerbated by consuming or using poor quality water:

- 1. Skin and Respiratory Irritation:** Chlorine and chlorination byproducts present in tap water can cause skin irritation and exacerbate conditions like eczema and psoriasis. Additionally, inhaling chlorinated water vapor during activities like showering can irritate the respiratory system.
- 2. Increased Toxic Load:** Exposure to heavy metals and other chemical contaminants in water can contribute to an increased toxic load in the body, which may overwhelm the detoxification systems and lead to chronic health issues over time.
- 3. Endocrine Disruption:** Certain chemicals found in water, such as phthalates and bisphenols, are known as endocrine disruptors. They can interfere with hormone function, potentially leading to hormonal imbalances, reproductive issues, and developmental problems, especially in children.
- 4. Neurological Effects:** Some contaminants, like lead and manganese, have neurotoxic properties and can negatively affect brain function and development, leading to cognitive impairments and behavioral issues, particularly in children.
- 5. Weakened Immune System:** Consuming water containing harmful pathogens or chemicals can compromise the immune system, making individuals more susceptible to infections and illnesses.
- 6. Increased Cancer Risk:** Long-term exposure to certain carcinogenic substances like arsenic, benzene, and trichloroethylene through contaminated water may raise the risk of developing certain cancers, including bladder, liver, and kidney cancer.
- 7. Reproductive and Developmental Issues:** Exposure to certain contaminants in water can impact reproductive health and fetal development, potentially leading to infertility, birth defects, or developmental delays in children.
- 8. Allergies and Asthma:** Poor water quality with high levels of chlorine and other irritants can exacerbate allergies and asthma symptoms in sensitive individuals.

When the water infrastructure in the US was initially installed, it was never meant to last forever, however, most municipalities have never replaced or do not have the funding to replace old outdated pipes.

Since all of what goes down the drain in our homes ends up in our water, think prescription medications, rinsing paint brushes, detergents used for laundry, dishes, etc. Plus the microplastics that break off of synthetic clothing when laundered. It all ends up in the collective water since much of this is not able to be filtered.

Adding a water filtration system to your home, kitchen and shower will go a long way in reducing your exposures and reducing your toxic load.

A good water filtration system does many things:

- **Eliminates Contaminants:** Tap water can contain various contaminants, including heavy metals, chlorine, pesticides, pharmaceutical residues, bacteria, and microplastics. These pollutants can have adverse effects on our health, contributing to chronic illnesses and compromising our immune systems.
- 1. **Reduces Chemical Exposure:** Chlorine and chlorination byproducts are commonly used to disinfect municipal water supplies. However, prolonged exposure to these chemicals can have negative consequences, such as skin irritation, respiratory issues, and an increased risk of certain cancers.
- 2. **Supports Detoxification:** For individuals healing from chronic illnesses, a clean water source is crucial to support the body's natural detoxification processes.
- 3. **Enhances Hydration:** Clean and filtered water is more appealing, leading to increased water intake and better hydration. Proper hydration is vital for overall health, promoting better digestion, nutrient absorption, and optimal cellular function.
- 4. **Protects Sensitive Individuals:** People with compromised immune systems or chronic illnesses are often more vulnerable to the effects of water contaminants.
- 5. **Promotes Sustainability:** Some water filtration systems, such as those using activated carbon or reverse osmosis, can help reduce the consumption of single-use plastic water bottles.
- 6. **Peace of Mind:** Knowing that the water coming from the tap is clean and free from harmful contaminants offers peace of mind to individuals and families. It allows them to focus on their well-being without worrying about the potential hazards of unfiltered water.



Water Purification

The first thing you need to know before choosing a water purification system is what's in your water that needs to be filtered out.

In the US, it's a law that all municipalities must submit a water quality report by July 1st of each year. You can contact your water authority and get a copy by asking for the Consumer Confidence Report or Water Quality Report.

You can also go to [EWG's Tap Water Database](#) and put in your zip code. This will give you a list of the chemicals in the water in your area.

If you have a well on your property, then I recommend having your water tested. [Tap Score](#) is a great place to start, they'll send you a kit that you'll send back and receive a comprehensive listing of what is in your water, including heavy metals, bacteria, viruses and other chemicals plus the levels of each, so you really get a good understanding of what's in your water.

If you are renting your home, don't worry, there are many things you can still do to filter your water!

When looking for a water filtration system, there are a few factors to look at.

- What is the cost and upkeep of the system.
- What contaminants are in the water, that need to be filtered out.
- What is the space availability in your home.

There are several types of water filter systems available for homes, each designed to target specific contaminants and meet different filtration needs. Here are some of the most common types of water filter systems:

1. Pitcher Filters: Pitcher filters have a simple design and are placed in a pitcher or jug. They are suitable for small quantities of filtered water and are portable, making them convenient for use in smaller households or while traveling.
2. Countertop Filters: Countertop filters sit on the kitchen counter and offer a higher flow rate compared to faucet-mounted filters and may include multiple stages of filtration.
3. Faucet-Mounted Filters: These filters attach directly to the faucet and are easy to install and use. They typically use activated carbon to improve taste and remove chlorine and some common contaminants.
4. Under-Sink Filters: These filters are installed under the kitchen sink and may or may not connect to a separate faucet. They offer more extensive filtration capabilities compared to faucet-mounted filters and are hidden from view.
5. Whole House Water Filters: These systems are installed at the point of entry of water into the home, treating water for the entire household. They can include various filtration technologies to address different contaminants throughout the house.
6. Reverse Osmosis (RO) Systems: RO systems use a semipermeable membrane to remove a wide range of contaminants, including dissolved solids, heavy metals, fluoride, bacteria, viruses, and other impurities. Comes in under-sink or whole house units.
7. Shower filters: These are usually in-line filters that are easy to install and filter the water that you're exposed to during bathing.

Whole house systems usually contain multi-step filtration, some offer UV filtration for areas with higher bacteria in the water and some offer water softening processes for water high in minerals, otherwise known as hard water.

How do you know what system would be best for you?

At the very least consider getting a filter for the water you drink, if you can, increase that to include the water you also cook with.

If you or someone in your home has skin issues, consider a filter for your shower as well.

I'll give you an example of what we do in our home.

We moved to this home 5 years ago, it's the first time we've had well water so we were both new to that.

The first thing we did was have the water tested, once we saw that we had higher than acceptable lead and iron plus bacteria and run off from local farms, we knew what to look for in a water filtration system.

It had to filter lead, soften the water from the high iron content and take care of the chemicals and bacteria from nearby farms.

We went with a multi stage approach. The water enters our home and goes through 3 separate in-line filters before going into a whole house softener that is also a filter. We have an under the counter water filter in the kitchen for cooking water and a Berkey countertop filter for drinking water. We also have filters on our shower heads.

Now this is a lot, however, we found that the iron was so high, that we needed this much filtering to eliminate the sulfur smell at the faucet and to stop the residues.

We opted not to have a water dispenser on our refrigerator since those filters only handle cosmetic filtering, which means, they only filter enough chlorine to make the water taste good, but all the other contaminants are still present.

We have a built in filter for the ice, and I can live with that.



There are a few certifications that you may see when looking at filtering systems, one is NSF, this stands for the National Sanitation Foundation, the second is ANSI, or American National Standards Institute.

When you see these certifications, you'll know that the barest minimum has been met in filtering your water.

Pitchers: The [Brita Denali pitcher with elite filter](#) ranks #1 by many online sources. The #2 pitcher is [Zero Water 10cup, 5-stage filter pitcher](#). There are so many pitcher filters on the market and many are overpriced and don't really filter much, stick with a reputable brand that has easy to find filter replacements.

Counter top units: I love [Berkey](#), in this category, they have add on flouride filters if your local water authority adds it to your water. This is a gravity fed unit, with the con being how much counter surface it takes up.

If a counter top unit is all you need, this [AquaSana](#) is a great unit as well. It uses a 4 part filtering system that removes all the big contaminates without going with a reverse osmosis system. You can't go wrong with this unit, especially for the price!

[PureEffect](#) offers several counter top reverse osmosis systems that are worth checking out, great for their size and price.

[Aqua Tru](#) offers a reverse osmosis countertop unit, its pricey but if you need this type of filtration system and can't put one under the sink, this is a good option.

Under the counter units: I really like [Hydroviv](#) for my under the counter filter unit. You simply supply your zip code and they send one that is specific to filtering what is in YOUR water. It is an in-line filter so no need for a second faucet at your sink.

[Aqua Tru](#) also offers this 4 stage reverse osmosis unit that filters out all the bad ones, arsenic, lead, chlorine, PFAS and more.

[AquaSana](#) has several under the counter units to choose from, all with a multi step filtering process.

When purchasing a whole house water filtration system, it's best to contact professionals in your area. Several of my neighbors have an [Aguasana](#) system and love it.

Some other brands you can look at are: [3M Aqua Pure](#), [GE](#) offers several models, [Softpro](#) (this is what I have), and [Whirlpool](#).

One thing I wanted to point out with reverse osmosis: yes, it removes the bad contaminants but it also remove all the beneficial minerals that our bodies need.

In conclusion...

I really can't stress enough how important breathing clean air is to your health, well being and even emotional state.

With all the wildfires, train derailments and other environmental factors that are effecting our health. Now is the time to invest in you and your families health!!

Equally as important as the air is the water you consume and use in your home.

With so much information coming out about how many contaminants are in the water throughout the US, we can no longer rely on our local municipalities to clean it up for us.

If you would like to read more information, check out [Erin Brokovich's substack](#) full of articles she has written ,as she continues to fight for clean water throughout the US and globally.

Here's to breathing clean fresh air and drinking clear clean water!!

As always, I'm sending you my biggest bear hug!!!

xoxo,
Annette

[The Sage Hearth](#)