



by Suzanne Swearngen,
DOM, AP

Do you recognize any of the following substances: alachlor, xylene, atrazine or butanol? Well, you could be drinking them.

The United States is considered to have one of the safest drinking water supplies in the world. Public water system water available to homes and businesses stems largely from streams and groundwater sources. It is monitored for substances that may cause immediate illness, such as bacteria and chemicals. Due to factors that remain unknown, there is still concern over the long-term effects it may be having on human health. One such factor is that there are no established health safety standards for chemical mixtures that are present in the water supply. Chemicals such as pharmaceutical drugs, dry cleaning solvents, and pesticides that have not been used in 20-30 years have been found in fish, groundwater and sediment of water source streambeds at levels that pose a risk to human health. To address this concern, the government established a Contaminant Candidate List in 1999, which consists of contaminants known or suspected to be present in drinking water and do not have health-based standards set under the Safe Drinking Water Act. It is reviewed every five years by the Environmental Protection Agency. As of October 2009, 104 chemicals/chemical groups and 12 microbiological contaminants are on this list. Among the items listed are various prescription drugs, chemicals, hormones and food additives, such as the chemical solvent n-butanol.

What can you do to support cleaner water on the Strand?

Do not use the toilet as a trash can! Pouring chemicals down the drain can damage pipes and septic systems, leaving them susceptible to leakage, thus putting your water supply at risk. Pouring chemicals on the ground or in drainage ditches can contaminate run-off and poses a similar threat. Bring such substances to a hazardous waste collection center.

Make changes in work and home habits, such as using nontoxic, water-based cleaners, soaps and phosphate-free detergents.

Only use as much pesticide or chemical fertilizer as needed—more is not better. Bring excess to a collection center. Composted lawn and garden trimmings serve as an excellent natural fertilizer.

Septic systems must be inspected annually and emptied on a regular schedule. Bacteria and pathogens from a

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leaky septic tank can find their way into fresh water pipes. Avoid using septic system additives, as they are not recommended.

Garden wisely by choosing plants that discourage pests, reduce erosion and require little water and fertilizer, such as hardy trees and shrubs.

Conserve water to prevent overloading the wastewater treatment facilities.

Invest in a quality water filtration system for the home. This provides for safer water to be used for bathing and cooking, and reduces wasted plastic water bottles.

Suzanne Swearngen, DOM, AP, is a board certified, licensed acupuncture physician, providing compassionate care for individuals seeking wholistic solutions for health. For more info, call Swearngen at the Alternative Health Clinic, 843-692-9243, or South Strand Cardiology at 843-293-2700. For more info on water quality, visit www.water.epa.gov, Water.EPA.gov. See ad page 13