

## AP Enterprise: Drugs affect more drinking water

By MARTHA MENDOZA, AP National Writer

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Testing prompted by an Associated Press story that revealed trace amounts of **pharmaceuticals in drinking water supplies** has shown that **more Americans are affected by the problem than previously thought — at least 46 million.**

That's up from 41 million people reported by the AP in March as part of an investigation into **the presence of pharmaceuticals in the nation's waterways.**

The AP stories prompted federal and local legislative hearings, brought about calls for mandatory testing and disclosure, and led officials in at least 27 additional metropolitan areas to analyze their drinking water. Positive tests were reported in 17 cases, including Reno, Nev., Savannah, Ga., Colorado Springs, Colo., and Huntsville, Ala. Results are pending in three others.

The test results, added to data from communities and water utilities that bowed to pressure to disclose earlier test results, produce the new total of Americans known to be exposed to drug-contaminated drinking water supplies.

The overwhelming majority of U.S. cities have not tested drinking water while eight cities — including Boston, Phoenix and Seattle — were relieved that tests showed no detections.

"We didn't think we'd find anything because our water comes from a pristine source, but after the AP stories we wanted to make sure and reassure our customers," said Andy Ryan, spokesman for Seattle Public Utilities.

The substances detected in the latest tests mirrored those cited in the earlier AP report.

Chicago, for example, found a cholesterol medication and a nicotine derivative. Many cities found the anti-convulsant carbamazepine. Officials in one of those communities, Colorado Springs, say they detected five pharmaceuticals in all, including a tranquilizer and a hormone.

"This is obviously an emerging issue and after the AP stories came out we felt it was the responsible thing for us to do, as a utility, to find out where we stand. We believe that at these levels, based on current science, that the water is completely safe for our customers," said Colorado Springs spokesman Steve Berry. "We don't want to create unnecessary alarm, but at the same time we have a responsibility as a municipal utility to communicate with our customers and let them know."

Fargo's water director, Bruce Grubb, said the concentrations of three drugs detected there were so incredibly minute — parts per trillion — that he sent them to the local health officer to figure out how to interpret the information for the community.

"We plan to put this into some kind of context other than just scientific nomenclature, so folks can get some level of understanding about what it means," said Grubb.

The drug residues detected in water supplies are generally flushed into sewers and waterways through human excretion. Many of the pharmaceuticals are known to slip through sewage and drinking water treatment plants.

While the comprehensive risks are still unclear, researchers are finding evidence that even extremely diluted concentrations of pharmaceutical residues harm fish, frogs and other aquatic species in the wild and impair the workings of human cells in the laboratory.

And while the new survey expands the known extent of the problem, the **overwhelming majority of U.S. communities have yet to test, including the single largest water provider in the country, New York City's Department of Environmental Protection, which delivers water to 9 million people.**

**In April, New York City council members insisted during an emergency hearing that their drinking water be tested. But DEP officials subsequently declared that "the testing of finished tap water is not warranted at this time."**

**From our archives, Everpure released the following statement in March, 2008:**



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**REVERSE OSMOSIS SYSTEMS TREAT PHARMACEUTICAL DRINKING WATER CONTAMINANTS**

**AP Investigation Unveils Prescription Drug Remnants;  
Findings Prompt Increased Concern Over Water Treatment Methods**

HANOVER PARK, Ill., March 11, 2008—A breaking investigation by The Associated Press found that at least 41 million Americans are being exposed to trace pharmaceuticals in their drinking water supplies. This report signals that now is a better time than ever for Americans to consider advanced water filtration options for their sustained health and safety.

During the five-month investigation, prescription drugs such as sex hormones, antibiotics, anti-convulsants and mood stabilizers were detected in the water supplies of 24 major metropolitan areas. Everpure, LLC, the leading authority in drinking water treatment, offers a wide array of commercial grade water filtration systems expressly designed to eradicate dangerous contaminants from tap water in the home.

A growing number of studies show that, even in low dosages, pharmaceutical drug remnants may be damaging to humans. Because the federal government has not established safety limits for drugs found in drinking water, consumers are left largely responsible for the safeguarding of water sources.

Because removing pharmaceutical traces from water is logistically challenging, reverse osmosis is widely agreed upon as the best available treatment method. With Everpure's [Reverse Osmosis III \(ROM III\) system](#), water first undergoes the reverse osmosis procedure (effectively filtering out the heavier molecular particles common in many pharmaceutical drugs), then passes through a granular-activated carbon membrane, which serves to filter out smaller impurities. The ROM III system also removes contaminants such as arsenic, lead, copper, sodium, nitrate/nitrite, fluoride, cysts, dissolved solids and chlorine taste and odor.

Although many under-sink filters contain activated carbon, the carbon membrane does not remain in contact with water long enough to sufficiently remove pharmaceutical remnants. With the news of this AP investigation, some consumers may turn to bottled water as a solution, yet many companies simply bottle

filtered tap water with no systems in place to test and treat the presence of pharmaceuticals. Since reverse osmosis is exceedingly expensive to execute on large-scale supplies, drinking water treatment plants frequently employ chlorine, a chemical that may make pharmaceuticals even more toxic to humans.

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“Bottled water and instant filtration cartridges are no longer a viable match against today’s complex drinking water contaminants,” said Eleni Yianas, director of residential marketing for Everpure. “Everpure’s Reverse Osmosis Systems offer water that is both clean and delicious, because consumers should never have to wonder what, exactly, their families are drinking.”

### **About Everpure:**

Since 1933, Everpure has been a leader in manufacturing commercial water filtration products worldwide. More restaurants depend on Everpure for their water filtration needs than any other brand. Everpure has also become a trusted provider of drinking water systems to vending, consumer, marine and aviation markets, and has aided numerous industry leaders in the improvement of their water treatment. Everpure is part of the Water Technologies Group of Pentair, Inc. (NYSE: PNR). AquaHealth Systems, Inc is one of the Master Distributors of Everpure Products, and is your local contact. For more information, call (800) 225-(PURE)7873 or visit [www.AquaHealthSystems.com](http://www.AquaHealthSystems.com).