

# How To Protect Drinking Water From Contaminants

Whether they spout forth well water or city water, the faucets at your kitchen sink and garden have something in common:

Both get their water from the same supply line. All outlets at every location on your property, inside and outside, get their water from the same source. The direct connection between all your home water lines means there is a direct link between the opening at the end of your garden hose and the faucet from which you get drinking water. Unfortunately, this can spell danger.

Here's a financial situation that dramatizes how danger can exist in a typical household water system: Dad finishes fertilizing the garden with weed-killer fertilizer pellets. Immediately after applying the chemical treatment he places the hose in a trench so that the fertilizer pellets will liquefy and feed the plants.

While dad is outside gardening, mom is in the shower. At the very same time, one of children decides to get a drink of water from the kitchen faucet. Later that night the youngster awakens desperately ill. A frantic trip to the hospital reveals weed poison in his blood.

A subsequent investigation at the home reveals that, due to a change in water pressure, a siphon was created. Garden irrigation water containing poisonous chemicals was drawn into the home and into the potable water system. And an innocent child was poisoned.

For the last few years the plumbing code has required that exterior faucets be equipped with a tiny new device that prevents garden water from backing up into a home's potable water system. These are known as backflow prevention devices. But if you aren't living in a newly built home, you probably are not protected for this potential danger.

You should determine whether you have a backflow prevention device on each of your exterior faucets and on your built in irrigation systems. Having them will prevent a deadly siphon from bringing dangerous outside water to the inside of your home.

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Making your house safer in this way is easy. A quick call to your local building department or plumbing supply store will get you the name of the approved backflow prevention device and perhaps a suggestion as to where it is sold.

Caution: Home improvement centers don't always carry items for sale that are approved by national, state and local building agencies and codes. So be sure to check on what's what before you buy.

Once you know which one to get and where to buy it, most of the work is done. Building agencies demand that you buy a special kind of device that can't be removed. They come threaded so that they can be screwed right onto the end of a faucet. Also, there is a set screw that is first tightened and then broken off. This way it is almost impossible to remove. The other end of the device has male threads that are identical to the end of the exterior faucet.

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