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Amplifying Life

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Reusable Water Bottles

Summer is here! We all know that staying hydrated is a key component to staying healthy! Consuming adequate amounts of fluids help bodily functions, including your heart, brain, and muscles. However, it is important to be aware of your daily habits when choosing and caring for your water bottle.

There are a few concerns given the chance that water bottles are touched by hands that are not always clean and the number of surfaces that the bottle could come into contact with throughout a normal day. In an analysis of unwashed water bottles, it was found that reusable water bottles can harbor significantly high levels of bacteria. According to the study, the average athlete's water bottle has 106 times more units of bacteria per square centimeter than the average pet toy!

In the study, performed by EmLab P&K, they analyzed 12 types of reusable water bottles and found trends in amounts of bacteria based on the design of the bottle. Slide-top bottles harbored the largest amount of bacteria by a significant amount. These were followed by the squeeze-top bottles and screw-top bottles. The bottle type that had the fewest bacteria were the kind with a straw top.

To care for your reusable water bottle, you should wash and disinfect your bottle after each day of use if possible. Wash with hot water and a few drops of dish soap, soak it for a few minutes, shake, rinse it well using warm water, and leave it open to air dry. For a deeper clean, after you wash it, use a vinegar soak of 1/5 white vinegar and 4/5 water. Let it soak overnight, then rinse thoroughly with water in the morning. Be sure to wash the lid really well.

A few tips to consider when using a water bottle: avoid letting your water bottle sit partially full for long periods of time between use. This water should be dumped out and refill with fresh water. Try to find a bottle that doesn't contain crevices and harder-to-clean spots, which harbor bacteria. Consider using a stainless steel bottle as they have been found to harbor fewer bacteria as well.

It is important to note that disposable plastic bottles aren't made to be used more than once. By washing and reusing a single-use bottle, you may begin to break down the plastic and expose yourself to harmful chemicals.

There is an increase in the discussion of the use of BPA materials. BPA stands for Bisphenol A and is used in the production of some plastics. Plastics with #1 through #6 are not at risk of containing BPA. Plastics with #7 on them have the possibility of containing BPA, but not all plastics that are labeled with a #7 contain BPA. Try to choose a water bottle with #1 through #6 designation or with a BPA-free label.

Being thoughtful in choosing a water bottle and intentional in the care of your water bottle can help ensure everyone stays hydrated and germ-free.

For more information, please feel free to contact me for additional resources. Shandi Andres, Flint Hills Extension District, 501 W Main, Council Grove, KS 66846. (620) 767-5136 or sdandres@ksu.edu