

Going soft? Maybe it's the water!

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Contaminated drinking water in our cities is of increasing importance

Published on
Booksie

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GOING SOFT? MAYBE IT'S THE WATER! by Nicholas Garton

Ever hear the old timers say "Oh, they don't make em like they used to"? Sometimes it's regarding a car or piece of furniture. Lately I've been hearing it concerning this younger generation. It seems we've all gone soft! One can see it in politics where candidates (especially Democrats, I'm sad to say) stutter and stammer and sit on the fence. You can see it in sports where soul crushing hits and demonstrative celebrations have given way to fake injuries in playoff games and abandoning teammates to hit South Beach. I hear many of the old timers wistfully yearn for the days when men were men!

For most of us those grumblings can be waved off as just being sexist or grumpy. But now studies are showing that men may really not be men the way they used to be! Could this be linked to the water we drink?

Estrogen mimickers have been found in water sources serving up to 41 million people according to an article entitled "Pink Water" from the Earth Island Journal. Estrogen is the main reproductive hormone in women. Men have a little bit of estrogen but having it in high levels can be dangerous for men. The amounts of estrogen in our drinking water, some of which is from prescription drugs being flushed into our water sources, can have horrible effects on humans. It can affect sperm levels, skew gender, and feminize males.

Worse than estrogen is Bisphenol A. In 2008 Milwaukee Journal Sentinel writers Meg Kissinger and Susanne Rust were nominated and won a Pulitzer Prize for their investigation of BPA levels in our water. They found that the amount of plastic we use on a daily basis, the prescription drugs we take, the hormones we give livestock, the pesticides we use all contribute to the levels of BPA in our water.

Once Bisphenol A reaches a certain level it can cause autism, ADHD, obesity, diabetes, cancer, and neurological damage. Virtually every city in North America has water containing high enough levels of BPA to cause those health concerns, according to "Pink Water."

Farms also contribute mightily to the pollution of our water. The Frontline documentary "Poison waters" explains how waste from farms raising chickens pollutes water. Rain washes away the waste and poop from the chickens into a river and from there it gets into our water supply.

So what's the point? Apart from the jokes about our being suddenly soft there is real concern here. The birth defects and feminization of fetuses makes it difficult to continue reproducing! Furthermore, the demoralizing health concerns like cancer and hormonal disruption have become increasingly widespread. The government won't do anything because there's no political will (although President Obama has tightened the reins on the EPA).

Political will rests on the will of the people. In the 70s people were demonstrating, protesting, and saying "we're not gonna take this". That forced President Nixon, who could not have cared less about pollution, to make environmental legislation. People forced that with action. But just as I said in the beginning we're all soft now from this polluted water so we can't rise up!

We're a comfortable people. We have laptops, Play stations, Xboxes, soda pops, luxurious hygiene products that make us look all pretty. We go to health clubs and drink lots of bottled water while we get in shape. What do all of those comforts have in common? Lots and lots of plastic! Plastic in amounts sufficient to contaminate our water supply. We spend lots of money on these luxuries that are slowly killing us. Maybe that's why we don't have the political will. We'd rather drink lousy, contaminated water than give up those basic comforts.

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