

Mercy Bottled Water Initiative Frequently Asked Questions

What is the bottled water initiative?

- Mercy is removing all water bottles from our facilities – including the cafeteria, vending areas, gift shops and co-worker areas.
- We will be installing bottle refill units in strategic locations throughout our facilities to improve easy access to water.
- Where reusable cups are not possible, we are switching from foam/plastic cups to paper cups.
 - Lids and straws are not changing at this time.
- Each Mercy facility maintains a three-day supply of one-liter water bottles per person for emergency purposes, from water main breaks and boil orders to disasters.
 - Mercy will replace the three-day supply of emergency plastic water bottles with an environmentally-friendly alternative.

Why is Mercy doing this?

- One of the “critical concerns” of the Sisters of Mercy is concern for the earth, especially water.
- As a ministry with a mission inherited from the Sisters, Mercy has a responsibility to echo this concern as part of our efforts toward good stewardship.
- On behalf of the Sisters of Mercy, the health ministry has been asked to see how we can continue to reduce Mercy’s environmental footprint, especially as it relates to water.
- To benefit the environment. Each year Mercy:
 - Uses 92,651 gallons of bottled water (614,400 plastic water bottles).
 - Contributes approximately 491,000 plastic water bottles to landfills, which is 80% of the bottles purchased at our facilities.
 - See this [fact sheet](#) for more about water and the environment.

When will this change go into effect?

- October 1. Mercy facilities will be hosting kickoff events throughout the week.
 - Please see your local co-worker newsletter or ask your leader when an event is scheduled in your area.
 - Clinic leaders will receive a special toolkit to help facilitate an event on-site.

What is expected of me?

- Each of us can easily support the Sisters in their concern about water scarcity by bringing reusable bottles of water to work or using reusable cups when drinking tap water.
- Mercy is providing reusable cups to all co-workers.
- When you get your vessel, we’ll give you a paper water droplet that you can write on it and post on your huddle board or in your break area – ask your leader

where your department will display yours. You may also obtain a paper drop from your leader. Or you can share your pledge electronically.

Why should I use reusable cups?

- Unlike with plastic water bottles that you have to purchase each time, you can refill a cup **with water** throughout the day for free any of the water stations or in Mercy cafes and cafeterias.
- They are better for the environment because they produce less waste and use less fuel in manufacturing. See this [fact sheet](#) for more about water and the environment.

When will cups be available?

- They will be distributed at kick-off events across Mercy the week of October 1.
 - Please see your local co-worker newsletter or ask your leader when an event is scheduled in your area.
 - Clinic leaders will receive a special toolkit to help facilitate an onsite event.

What do the cups look like?

- They are available in four colors like those in the Mercy cross.
- You can write on them in marker if you want to put your name on your cup.



What if I don't want a cup or already have one?

- If you don't want one, just let us know. A percent of the cost of the undistributed cups will be donated to a water relief charity.

What if I want to purchase a second cup or need to replace the one I have?

- Additional cups will be available for purchase in co-worker stores as well as in the online co-worker store, [Mercy Marketplace](#).

I'm concerned about having to drink tap water. Isn't bottled water safer than tap water?

- Actually, it's not. Studies have shown little to no difference between the qualities of water provided in bottled water vs city-supplied water.
 - There are no requirements for bottled water to be cleaner than tap water.
 - In fact, some sources of bottled water come from tap water – up to 47.9 percent.
 - In taste tests, tap water consistently ranks at or above the level of bottled water. Both water supplies are tested on a regular basis, but by different agencies.
 - Bottled water must adhere to FDA requirements, while city supplied water must comply with EPA Safe Drinking Water Act requirements.

- Most of the parameters in the FDA requirements are the same as the EPA Safe Drinking Water Act requirements.
 - Water supplied by a municipality must disclose testing results to the public. This is not required for bottled water.
- Mercy is currently implementing water quality management plans at all hospitals and large clinics. These plans help ensure controls are in-place to protect the quality of water used by co-workers, patients, visitors, and equipment.
- Chemicals in plastic bottles can leach into water when the bottles aren't properly stored and there is no way to trace the storage history of your bottles.
- The expiration date on bottled water is for the bottle, not the water.

Why do we use the word “vessel” in some of our communications rather than the word “cup?”

- The Sisters of Mercy and Mercy leadership have been intentional in our use of language around reusable vessels.
 - Use of the word “vessel” ties back to our heritage of service as recalled in the vessel walls at many of our facilities.
 - It reminds us of the waters of baptism and that we are vessels of God’s love, called to be good stewards and pour out ourselves in service of others.
 - It is also a reminder that we are part of creation, and like the Earth, we are made up mostly of water.
- At the same time, we understand that most people are more familiar with the word “cup” and so we’ve chosen to use that in direct co-worker communications.