

## Water Basics

Water is necessary to support life. Yet not every country has enough water to meet its people's needs. In places where the climate is very dry, there may not be enough water to grow crops. This limits food production and can cause food shortages.



In other countries, water is available, but people still carry it by hand from rivers or community wells. Often this water is not clean, so it can cause sickness and death.

In the United States, most people have enough water for their needs. Usually this water comes from privately or publicly owned water companies. These companies are called water utilities.

Water utilities get their water from many different sources, such as rivers, lakes and groundwater. Precipitation can fill and refill these sources in several ways. It can fall directly into the bodies of water. It can also fall on the ground and travel as runoff into streams, lakes and rivers; or it can percolate into the soil to replenish groundwater supplies.



Water utilities treat water to make it safe for people to drink. Water treatment is the process of removing dirt and other matter from the water. There are many different water treatment methods. The process used usually depends on the quality of the source water. But no matter how water is treated, it must meet or exceed standards set by the United States Environmental Protection Agency, as well as by state and local government agencies.