



Best Buys in Water Filters

Best Buy Categories:

[P]=Premium selection;
[M]=Midrange selection;
[E]=Economy selection.
See page 72.

Under-Sink Systems

[P] American Plumber WRO-3500

List: \$410; Best Price: \$340
One of the most efficient water-purification products available in any category, this system delivers as much as 7.6 gal. of fresh-tasting water daily. It can be used to clean chlorinated and nonchlorinated (including private well) water

sources. The three-stage filter takes out particles down to 0.0001 microns. Water is delivered on demand from a 2.5-gal. storage tank that has an automatic shutoff valve to eliminate waste. An electronic monitor indicates when it's time to change the membrane.

Features:

- * Filter life: 3 mos., prefilter, replacement best price \$17; 1 yr., post-polishing carbon filter, replacement best price \$24; 2 yrs., membrane; replacement best price \$73
- * Warranty: 1-yr. limited

[M] Hydrotech Aquafier AQ4V

List: \$280; Best Price: \$254
Besides being an efficient pollutants remover, this system is guaranteed leak-free. A one-piece, molded manifold eliminates cracks and weld-points where leaks can occur. A three-stage filter reduces lead, iron, magnesium and VOCs. Quick-connect fittings and color-coded tubing simplify installation and maintenance. This sys-

tem can be used to clean water that is municipally treated or from private wells. An upgraded AQ4V adds a filter-change monitor while removing a few more contaminants, but an extra \$60 seems costly.

Features:

- * Filter life: 1 yr., replacement best price \$41
- * Warranty: 2-yr. limited

[E] Kenmore 38460

List: \$85; Best Price: \$80

This dual-cartridge system exceeds expectations for a product in this price range by removing 99 percent of lead, iron, magnesium, fine sediment and cysts. Simple to install, this system can be linked with a sink's cold-water line or a separate faucet, which limits filtered water use and thus extends filter life.

Features:

- * Filter life: 4 mos., replacement best price \$27 in package of two
- * Warranty: 1-yr. limited

Shower-Head Filters

[M] Aquasana AQ-4100

List: \$80; Best Price: \$62

By removing a greater variety of

contaminants than similarly priced models, this two-stage system takes out chlorine while balancing pH and strips water of most synthetic chemicals and VOCs. Easy to install, the system comes with an adjustable-pressure shower head.

Features:

- * Filter life: 6 mos., replacement best price \$37
- * Warranty: Limited lifetime

[E] Crystal Quest Luxury Shower Power

List: \$45; Best Price: \$35

A unique reversible filter cartridge that lasts twice as long as comparable filters provides superior contaminant removal for an economy model. The filter can adsorb contaminants such as chlorine, hydrogen sulfide, iron oxides, VOCs, pesticides and sediment. A regular shower head is attached.

Features:

- * Filter life: 1 yr., replacement best price \$19
- * Warranty: 1-yr. limited

For more information on the above Best Buys, contact the manufacturers directly. See page 71.



Hydrotech Aquafier AQ4V

percent the allowable level of arsenic in water. Arsenic, which occurs naturally, is a particular problem in water-scarce areas of Arizona and other southwestern U.S. states. The contaminant content of water varies radically across the country and even in abutting towns.

"If your local source water has arsenic or radon, you'll need something more than a system that corrects 'egg water' to take out the trace amounts of these contaminants that may get by local water treatment," Andrews emphasizes.

"It makes good sense for consumers to do a little research to determine their filtration needs before purchasing an in-home treatment system. A good place to start would be to get a water-analysis report of home tap water from the local municipal water treatment agency," he advises.

Once you discover your water-purification needs, you can choose the system that will best resolve your water prob-

lems. Granulated activated carbon filters primarily take out odors and taste-altering substances such as chlorine, iron and sulfates. Ceramic-carbon hybrid filters do a better job removing minute particles that cause turbidity, or cloudiness in the water caused by fine particles and microorganisms, as well as waterborne grit, pathogenic bacteria, cysts and asbestos fibers. But they cost slightly more than comparable straight carbon filters that remove the same number of contaminants (about \$39 to \$58 every 3 months).

Reverse-osmosis systems force water through a semi-permeable membrane to screen out minerals, microorganisms and other contaminants, especially heavy metals. But reverse-osmosis systems also require regular flushing of the membrane to send the buildup of contaminants down a drain, and this can result in gallons of water being wasted. Also, the membrane degrades over time, requir-

ing—along with the system's two carbon filters—periodic replacement.

Ultraviolet (UV) technology is used in a few systems to augment carbon block filters. UV light sterilizes water by killing microorganisms, including bacteria and viruses, but the method has its price. Models start above \$550.

Although some systems are sold exclusively through local plumbing firms, professional installation is not always necessary. Any household member handy with a screwdriver, pliers and other common household tools can install most systems and let the clean water flow from the tap to your glass. ●

James J. Hodl has covered the technical side of the household products used in the kitchen and bathroom for 35 years, 25 of which were spent as editor of "Appliance Service News." He has authored many articles on home water-filtration systems for trade and consumer magazines.