ANSES - French Agency for Food, Environmental and Occupational Health & Safety

Filter Jugs: Anses recaps on how they should be used properly

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https://www.anses.fr/fr/content/carafes-filtrantes-l%E2%80%99anses-rappelle-les-r%C3%A8gles-de-bon-usage

Following its self-initiated investigation, today ANSES publishes its opinion on the innocuousness and effectiveness of filter jugs, concluding that the data currently available reveals no real risk to the health of the consumer. However, the Agency does state that the use of filter jugs may lead to the release of diverse contaminants (silver, sodium, potassium, ammonium ions) into drinking water and likewise to the reduction of the pH and even alteration of the microbiological qualities of the water. Consequently, it has issued a series of recommendations seeking to improve the existing standardised test protocols which define the performance and safety requirements of filter jugs. The Agency recommends the user carefully follow the manufacturer's instructions for the jug, particularly in all matters regarding its use and cleaning and the preservation of the filtered water. It likewise reminds the user that filter jugs are not designed to make potable water which is not already potable and are only for use with water already exclusively designated as intended for human consumption (ECDH) and supplied through the mains to the customer's tap.

Filter jugs are domestic water treatment devices, strictly to be used only with water already designated as intended for human consumption (ECDH). They are not designed to make potable water that is not already potable. The claims made by the manufacturers of filter jugs include assertions that they improve the organoleptic qualities of water (particularly the taste of chlorine), filter out lime scale or certain metals such as lead. 20% of French homes have filter jugs.

Given the information provided to the General Directorate for Competition, Consumption and Fraud Repression (DGCCRF), stating that such devices released certain undesirable substances into the water, the questions raised regarding the innocuousness and effectiveness of such jugs, and the articles published in the press, ANSES took it upon itself to investigate the innocuousness and effectiveness of such filter jugs.

The Agency's area of expertise is in non-portable domestic systems (filter jugs and bottles) used exclusively with water intended for human consumption delivered from the tap and not permanently connected to the potable water distribution mains. Thus, filter bottles for a single user, which can be taken into the mouth, permanent under-sink or tap fitted filters, emergency commercial domestic water disinfection filtering systems or systems designed for travellers do not fall within its area of expertise.

Agency Recommendations

The use of filter jugs may lead to the release of diverse contaminants (silver, sodium, potassium, ammonium ions) into drinking water, to the reduction of the pH and even alteration of the microbiological qualities of the water**.** However, the data currently available does not reveal any risk to the health of the consumer**.**

Moreover, even if the results currently available do show that the majority of filter jugs conform to the standards and recommendations concerning the reduction of smell, taste, concentrations of chlorine, lead and copper, the data as such do not permit us to assess the real effectiveness of all the water jugs currently on the market. The Agency considers that claims for effectiveness should be regularly verified by way of standardised tests and the observed percentage reduction in the parameters tested should be featured on the packaging and/or instructions for use of the filter cartridges.

The Agency has formulated a series of recommendations aimed at improving the protocols for the existing standardised tests of the innocuousness and effectiveness of filter jugs. It suggests its recommendations should first be tested in the laboratory to ensure their feasibility.

The Agency insists on the need to duly inform the consumer of the restrictions or warnings for use with respect to the observed effects on the quality of filtered water. Thus, it also recommends that the user:

- closely follows the specified form of use and any restrictions or warnings of use there may be: cleaning of the jug, regular changing of the cartridge, contact between the filtered water and certain kinds of metal or ceramic implements, particularly when the water is heated, infant nutrition, advice of a doctor for people following diets, particularly those low in sodium or potassium;
- keep the filter jug and its water in the refrigerator and do not delay in using the water, ideal within 24 hours of filtering;
- pay particular attention to the manufacturer's declared claims of effectiveness (label showing the parameters for which conformity has been verified).

The Agency recommends that the filtered water comply with the quality limits or references defined in the regulations concerning water intended for human consumption (EDCH). With particular respect to silver, even if the levels detected in filtered water remain below the 100

µg/L guideline for water established by the World Health Organisation (WHO), the Agency recommends that it is examined in the light of the most recent toxicological data and underscores the need to consider the risk/benefit ratio for this kind of use of silver.

In short, the Agency reminds us that the material out of which the jug, bottle and cartridge are made should meet the regulatory requirements for food contact materials (FCM). Likewise, manufacturers have the obligation to ensure that said FCM do not release sufficient amounts of elements into filtered water to represent a threat to human health, or that could mean an unacceptable change in the composition of the filtered water or its organoleptic properties. The Agency also seeks to draw the consumer's attention to products sold online and which might not necessarily meet the requirements of the European regulations and underscores the need for the public authorities to verify the compliance of such products.