

June 24, 2020

John Mackey
Chief Executive Officer
Whole Foods Market
550 Bowie Street
Austin, TX 78703-4644

Dear Mr. Mackey:

As a result of a recent Consumer Reports investigation that found potentially harmful arsenic levels in Starkey Spring Water, we write to urge you to suspend the sale of this product immediately. We also urge you not to resume the sale of this product until it can meet the standard being met by dozens of other brands.

In a test of over 40 bottled water brands, Consumer Reports found that the arsenic levels in Starkey Spring Water were at least three times higher compared to the other brands tested. The findings ranged from 9.49 to 9.56 parts per billion (ppb). While these results were just below the federal limit of 10 ppb, the 44 other brands that were tested all registered findings below 3 ppb. For additional context, with respect to arsenic, tap water in certain states is safer to consume than Starkey bottled water.

Unfortunately, problems with high arsenic levels appear to be a chronic issue with Starkey Spring Water, as evidenced by the following:

- Last year, the Center for Environmental Health, a nonprofit organization based in Oakland, CA announced that independent [testing](#) found high levels of arsenic in Starkey bottled water.
- In December 2016, Starkey issued a recall after regulators found levels of arsenic at 11.7 ppb, beyond the federal 10 ppb limit.
- Several weeks later in January 2017, another recall was issued after 12 ppb of arsenic was detected in another sample.
- Subsequent to these recalls, internal testing conducted by Whole Foods showed results that were just under the federal limit, but at levels that posed a risk if consumed regularly.

Drinking a single bottle of water with arsenic levels near federal limits likely would not be harmful. However, regular consumption of even small amounts of arsenic over an extended period increases the risk of cardiovascular disease and certain cancers, and it can impact brain development in children.

Consumers demand that their health be taken seriously, and that this should be reflected in the products being offered for sale. This is especially true at Whole Foods where products are often associated with premium price points. It is imperative that Whole Foods act quickly in the public interest to discontinue carrying products such as Starkey Spring Water that could pose a risk to consumers.

Sincerely,

/s/

Brian Ronholm
Director, Food Policy
Consumer Reports