

Water Pollution: Can You See It?

Celebrate Earth Day, or bring green to *any* day, by encouraging your kids to explore the effects of water pollution on the environment. Is our water polluted? Gather some samples, arm yourselves with coffee filters, and find out! This activity is a good way to encourage kids to be more aware of their environment and it allows them to make connections with real-world, environmental issues.

What You Need:

- 4 large, clean jars
- 4-5 large, wide-mouth jars
- Masking tape
- Cone-shaped paper coffee filters
- Magnifying glass

What You Do:

1. Using the four large jars, collect samples of water from four different sources. Good sources to use might be tap water, bottled water, rain water, or water from creeks, ponds, rivers, or even the ocean.
2. Using the masking tape and a marker, label each jar so that you will be able to easily identify the source of the water.
3. Fit the coffee filters just inside the mouths of the large, wide-mouthed jars. Take one of the water samples, and slowly pour the water through the filter into the other jar. Repeat for each water sample. Don't forget to label the filters and new jars, so they don't get mixed up.
4. Open each filter and examine it through the magnifying glass. Discuss the filters with your child. Which filter is the most discolored? Which filter caught the most particles? Did any of the samples leave a colored residue on the filter?
5. Discuss with your child how the water in rivers, streams and ponds can become polluted. Where do pollutants come from? (A major cause of water pollution is due to the chemicals and dyes that factories release into rivers. Individuals who drop litter in water sources like rivers, streams, or creeks, also contribute to water pollution.)



Extension Activity:

Help your child understand that water can be polluted even if the pollution is not dramatically visible.

What You Need:

- Large, clear container
- Cup
- Red food coloring
- Water

What You Do:

1. Pour one cupful of water into the large container.
2. "Pollute" this water by adding a little red food coloring.
3. Add water, one cupful at a time, until the water looks clear.
4. Discuss the implications of this demonstration with your child. Assist him in making connections between this experiment and the real world. Some questions to think about are: Can we see the dye? Is the dye still in the water? If people were to drink from this water, would they also drink the dye? What would happen if the dye was poisonous or dangerous?