

Practical ramifications

A faucet with a filter

Is it permitted to use a faucet with a filter? Is it permitted to use a water purification apparatus?

Tap water is typically clean and most people drink it as it is. Therefore, these questions depend on the aforementioned dispute between the *Rishonim* whether it is permitted to **filter clear water with a strainer**: According to the **Rambam** this is prohibited, whereas the **Rashba** and the **Ran** maintain that it is permitted, and this is the *halakha*.

This is the halakhic conclusion of the *Hazon Ish* (53, s.v. *ve'im*), as well:

And when a filter is attached to a faucet, in order to filter water from sand, if most people do not refrain from drinking the water unfiltered, it is permitted... however, if there is much sand, so that most do not drink it without filtering, it is prohibited.



It is permitted to use a water purification apparatus, provided the water is considered clean by most people and that it does not activate electricity. Some authorities rule stringently.

Accordingly, it is permitted to use a **faucet with a filter** or a **water purification apparatus**, when the water is clean enough that **most people would drink it without filtering**. However, in a place where most people would not drink the water without filtering, ostensibly, one should not use those devices.

By contrast, *Minhat Yitzhak* writes that even if the unfiltered water is unfit for drinking, it is permitted to use a filter (7:23):

It is permitted to filter clean water that most people drink without filtering

Minhat Yitzhak: It is permitted to use a faucet with a filter even when the water is not clean

However, it appears that in a case like this, where the sieve is permanently affixed to the mouth of the faucet, so that the water could flow from the faucet without the sieve only if it were

removed... one could say that since all the water flows through there, even the water used for hand washing and cleaning... and no new action is performed to render the water potable, this is no worse than Selecting by hand, which is permitted when food is removed from waste for immediate consumption... Know that if not, you have made living impossible, as even without the sieve on the faucet, the city's water flows through several filters until it enters the pipes in the home, without which drinking that water would be impossible. If so, even without placing a sieve on the faucet it would be prohibited to take water from the faucet on Shabbat. Rather, we must say as above.

According to this opinion, since the filter is permanently attached to the faucet and is not designated specifically for preparing water for drinking, but is also used for water for hand washing and other similar purposes, this is not the typical manner of Selecting. Instead, it is comparable to Selecting by hand, which is permitted when performed for immediate use. This is similar to the opinion of the *Hazon Ish* below with regard to a tea strainer.

However, the opinion of the *Minhat Yitzhak* is stated regarding a standard home filter; it is uncertain whether it applies to a water purification system, due to its special significance for filtering, especially when it is used exclusively for filtering drinking water. Therefore, it is permitted to employ such a system only for water that most people would drink without purification, provided that electricity is not activated each time water emerges from the faucet. Recently, some authorities have challenged the use of these systems even for potable water; but those who are lenient have authorities upon whom they can rely, especially when using the various types of water dispensers.⁶



It is permitted to use a faucet with a strainer.

A water purification system is permitted only for clean water

6. Several authorities claim that today, it is prohibited to use most of the water filtering systems on Shabbat even if the water that enters is potable

What is the *halakha* in a case where most people drink the water without filtering, but a certain person is **very particular** and always filters the water? The *Beur Halakha* writes that if everyone drinks the water together with the small wood slivers in it, and one person is insistent on filtering the water to remove the slivers, it is prohibited to filter the water, as in this instance the principle that individual preferences are rendered irrelevant by the general custom is not applicable (319:10, s.v. *ho'il*):

A person who is particular to always filter water

without filtering. In their opinion, in those systems, water typically remains mixed with coal granules or dirt that is unfit for drinking. When opening the faucet, this water is filtered and emerges clean. Opening the faucet caused the filtering of the water that was mixed with waste, which might constitute Selecting by Torah law. By contrast, some prominent authorities, among them Rav Asher Weiss (in the *Or Yisrael* periodical #68, pp. 48–50) and Rav Yitzhak Yosef (in *Beit Maran, VaYeira 5777*), permitted using these systems on Shabbat. Rav Weiss argued that it is possible to consider the entire system a single unit, into which the water enters clear and emerges clear, in which case there is room for leniency, as will be explained (pp. 926–927). What transpires inside the system is part of its mode of operation and is of no interest to the person using it. In his opinion, even in the case of a wine strainer, which is the source of the leniency in the case where clear water enters and clear water emerges, apparently, some of the water remains in the strainer mixed with the sediment, and, nevertheless, it is permitted to add water and cause them to be filtered. Additional opinions of the authorities, some lenient and some stringent, are cited at length in the *Or Yisrael* periodical, cited above.

In practice, if one seeks to purchase a water purification system, it is preferable to purchase a water dispenser with a Shabbat mode, rather than a water purification system installed under the sink. The amount of dirty water in the water dispensers is relatively small, approximately 1.35 oz. (40 ml), and it is comparable to the small amount of water that remains in the wine strainer, which, as stated, indirectly causes it to be filtered by adding additional water. This is in contrast to a water purification system, in which at any given moment there is a much larger amount of dirty water, approximately 16.9 oz. (500 ml). However, one who already has a water purification system installed and wishes to use it on Shabbat has many prominent authorities upon whom to rely, as mentioned. The entire matter requires further analysis from both the factual and halakhic perspectives.

SIFTING

One who is fastidious and cannot drink in this manner, when there are slivers and the like, it is possible that although most people are not particular at all, we do not say that his opinion is rendered irrelevant, but for him it is prohibited, as it is Selecting.

In his opinion, it is prohibited for one who as a rule is particular to filter water, to do so on Shabbat, and this is likewise, the opinion of Rav Elyashiv (cited in *Orehot Shabbat* 3, note 37). However, Rav Nissim Karelitz (cited ad loc., note 38) maintains that the stringent ruling of the *Beur Halakha* applies only when the waste is discernible in the water; concerning tap water today, in which waste is typically not discernible, there is room for leniency.

In conclusion: In a place where most people **drink water without filtering**, it is permitted to use a faucet with a filter or a water purification apparatus, provided that electricity is not activated in the process. However others question whether one may use such systems today. In a place where most people **do not drink water without filtering**, it is permitted to utilize the filter attached to a faucet for immediate use, but it is prohibited to use a water purification apparatus.

Practical *halakha*:
Regarding a faucet
with a filter and a
water purification
apparatus