



More Germs on Water Fountain or in Toilet Water?

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Thirteen-year-old Kyleray Katherman never imagined a simple school project would garner him national fame, but it did.

What began as an English class assignment to write a persuasive paper turned into a full review of his middle school's decision to ban water bottles. Katherman studied the water in the school's water fountains and discovered it wasn't very clean ... in fact, it wasn't even as clean as the water in the toilets.

His work went from the local paper all the way to Jay Leno's monologue.

"And a 13-year-old boy in an Oregon middle school has done a science experiment showing that the water in the lavatory toilets, the water in the toilets was cleaner than the water in the drinking fountains, to which every dog in America said, 'See!'" Leno joked on "The Tonight Show."

The experiment was Katherman's challenge to a policy at the North Bend Middle School in Oregon that banned water bottles after school officials discovered some students were using them to sneak in alcohol. The policy forced students to use the drinking fountains.

Katherman said today on "Good Morning America" that he believed students should have a choice between carrying a water bottle or using a fountain. And he had some suspicions about the cleanliness of the water.

Armed with cotton swabs and petri dishes, Katherman tested the bacteria content at four water fountains and one toilet, swabbing the fountains and their spigots. "We put it into an incubator and the bacteria grew on the petri plate," Katherman said.

His results shocked everyone. The fountain water was swimming with bacteria, while the bathroom toilet water was significantly cleaner.

The cleanest fountain was located in the fifth- and sixth-grade hallway, while the dirtiest was just outside the gym, Katherman said. But even the cleanest fountain wasn't as clean as the toilet.

"The toilet water is usually cleaner with regard to bacteria because toilets get continuously flushed, whereas a water fountain is left open to the environment," said Dr. Phillip Tierno of New York University Medical Center. "You know that toilets are occasionally washed, but I've never seen a water fountain sanitized at all."

The experiment resulted in an A-plus for Katherman.