

SIGNIFICANT PERCENTAGE OF DRINKING WATER SAID CONTAMINATED

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[Article by Menachem Shalev]

[Text] Over 10 per cent of the population in Israel regularly drink contaminated water, according to Dr. Alma Avni, director of the Health Ministry's Public Health Services.

Contaminated water was found at various times last year in 540 of the country's 1,200 settlements. The Health Ministry recently ordered district engineers to institute special purification measures. But the ministry admits that in 200 smaller settlements, contaminated water regularly pollutes the drinking water supply.

Water is deemed contaminated when a larger than normal number of *coli*-type bacteria are detected.

These germs although harmless themselves, indicate the presence of other, harmful organisms, such as *coli fecali*, which enter the water system from sewage pipes.

Last July's dysentery epidemic in Haifa, where over 9,000 people were infected, was caused by sewage seeping into a water main. A four-member committee set up to investigate the affair made recommendations to prevent a recurrence.

But most of their recommendations were not implemented, according to Mordechai Jakobowitz, a spokesman for the Mekorot water company which supplies drinking water.