

Happy World Toilet Day!

By ACSH Staff — November 20, 2008

Yesterday was [World Toilet Day](#) ^[1], inspiring the *Los Angeles Times* to pose an interesting question: "If you had to live without toilets or electricity, which would you choose?" While ACSH staffers find the idea of life without electricity to be a dim prospect, we would certainly forgo its convenience in favor of all the public health benefits of toilets.

"Human waste is a major cause of disease, especially when it contaminates water supplies," ACSH's Dr. Elizabeth Whelan explains. Many cholera outbreaks in the nineteenth century were caused by that very problem, and their devastating effects inspired cities like London and New York to build sewers and sanitation systems that kept drinking water clean.

An estimated 2.5 billion people around the world still live without even the basic sanitation of covered pit latrines, causing a number of serious public health problems. "It is widely agreed that one of the most important interventions for the world's poor is improving access to clean water, and a lot of that effort should focus on providing better sanitation," says ACSH's Dr. Ruth Kava.

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[1] <http://www.latimes.com/news/custom/scimedemail/la-oe-wertheim19-2008nov19,0,7472448.story>