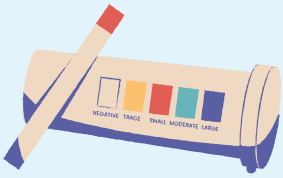
Testing Drinking Water From Your Private Well

If you get your water from a private well or spring, it is recommended that you test regularly.

Additional Reasons to Test Your Water:

- Unusual smell, taste, or color changes
- Work has been done to the well head, casing or pump
- There was flooding around wellhead
- Individuals who consume the water are pregnant or under 1 year old

Bacterial Test (recommended every year):
Total Coliform and E.Coli bacteria are found in the environment and feces (poop) from humans and animals. Some bacteria like coliform may not make people sick, but E.Coli can cause severe illness. The presence of any bacteria means your water source is being contaminated by surface water. Safe water sources should test negative for any type of bacteria.



Inorganic or Metals Testing (recommended every five years)
Test usually includes: nitrate, nitrite, *arsenic, chloride, copper, fluoride, hardness, iron, lead, manganese, sodium and strontium.*
These elements are common in groundwater and can cause nuisance problems, like color or taste, or negative health effects.

Pesticide Test (recommended rarely)
This test is only recommended when there is a reason to suspect contamination, for example, if your well test for high nitrate/nitrite. Tests may evaluate a variety of different herbicides and insecticides used on agricultural fields, gardens, pets, and in homes.

What Do Your Results Tell You?

Bacteria (Total Coliform & E.Coli):
Indicates the contamination of private well water source. Effects can range from no symptoms all the way to severe stomach cramps and diarrhea. No bacteria should be present.

Nitrate/Nitrite:
High levels in your water system may indicate nitrates in the water table, but it can also mean your well has contamination from sources such as septic systems, fertilizers or farm fields. Symptoms of too much nitrate include headache, sleepiness, and blue baby syndrome. The maximum limit is 10.0 mg/L.

Fluoride:
A mineral found in nature that strengthens tooth enamel. You should know if your well water contains fluoride so you can make adjustments to infant formula or children's supplements. Regular exposure to very high levels of fluoride can cause discoloration in developing teeth. The maximum limit is 4.0 mg/L.

Hardness:
There are no known health risks but high levels can keep soap from lathering, and cause buildup of scale in water heaters, cookware and plumbing.

Calcium:
Is an essential nutrient and is considered beneficial to bone/tooth development, blood clotting, and may also reduce heart disease. It is naturally found in groundwater but can cause buildup of scale in plumbing, and cookware. Typical range is 9-67 mg/L in unsoftened well water.

Iron:
Elevated levels of iron can stain clothing, sinks, toilets and bathtubs. Iron can give water a metallic taste, but is not known to cause negative health effects. The recommended maximum limit is 0.3 mg/L.

Lead:
A toxic metal that can come from older plumbing and certain underground mineral deposits. It can affect the brain, kidneys and nervous system, especially for children and pregnant women. There is no safe level of lead in the body.

Manganese:
An essential element, but high amounts could affect the nervous system. It can discolor water, stain clothing and bathroom fixtures grey/black. The maximum limit is 300 ug/L.

Magnesium:
A natural element found in well water due to the erosion of rocks deep underground. This mineral can cause the hardness in your well water and buildup on your appliances. Consuming high amounts may lead to stomachache, vomiting or diarrhea. Typical values range between 3 and 35 mg/L in unsoftened well water.

Strontium:
A mineral that is commonly found in soil and groundwater. It can interfere with how bones develop by replacing calcium in bones and blocking the absorption of vitamin D and calcium in the intestines. The maximum limit is 1,500 ug/L.

Copper:
Elevated levels of copper can stain plumbing fixtures and give the water a metallic taste. High amounts can cause stomachaches, vomiting or diarrhea. The maximum limit is 1300 ug/L.

Arsenic:
Has been linked to increased lifetime risk for bladder, lung or skin cancer. The maximum contaminant limit is 10 ug/L.

For More Information Contact Your Local Environmental Health Specialist

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