



Protect Your Drinking Water:

Why Private Well Testing Matters

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For households and businesses that rely on private wells, maintaining water quality is essential. Unlike municipal systems, private wells are not routinely monitored by public utilities. This means the responsibility for testing and maintaining safe drinking water falls on the well owner.

Why Regular Well Testing Is Important

Over time, wells can degrade, allowing contaminants to enter the water supply. Groundwater conditions can also change due to environmental factors, nearby activities, or natural geological sources.

Regular testing is the only reliable way to ensure that your water remains safe, since most contaminants are colorless, odorless, and tasteless. Routine testing helps protect your household, employees, and customers from potential health risks.

For licensed establishments that rely on private wells, annual testing for certain contaminants is required to ensure water safety.



For **licensed establishments** submitting samples, results will only be accepted if they're from an **accredited lab**.


Getting Your Water Tested

Water samples should be analyzed by an accredited laboratory to ensure accurate results.

Depending on the service provider:

- You may collect the water sample yourself, or
- A technician may collect it for you.

Be sure to follow all sampling and timing instructions carefully. Improper collection can result in inaccurate results and require resampling.



“ Testing is the only reliable way to detect most well contaminants because they are often tasteless, colorless, and odorless. ”

Protecting Your Well

Preventing contamination is just as important as testing. Simple maintenance steps can greatly reduce the risk of pollutants entering your well.

Best practices include:

- Ensure the ground slopes away from the well to prevent runoff contamination
- Install and maintain a secure well cap or sanitary seal
- Keep maintenance and inspection records
- Use certified professionals for well drilling and repairs
- Maintain septic systems properly
- Keep chemicals, fuels, pesticides, and fertilizers away from the well
- Inspect well casings for cracks, corrosion, or missing caps
- Keep well casing at least one foot above ground level

The “Big 5” Contaminants to Test For

Coliform Bacteria (Test Annually)

Coliform bacteria may indicate the presence of disease-causing organisms in your water.

Possible symptoms of contamination may include:

- Diarrhea
- Vomiting
- Nausea
- Cramps
- Headaches
- Fever
- Fatigue

It is required that all establishments that have a private well system get **coliform** and **nitrates** tested **annually** through an accredited lab.

If coliform is detected, find an alternative water source immediately and disinfect the well before retesting. **Refer to the [disinfection guide](#).**

Nitrates (Test Annually)

Nitrates are especially dangerous for infants.

High nitrate levels can interfere with the blood's ability to carry oxygen and may cause Blue Baby Syndrome (hypoxia) in infants under six months old. Severe cases can result in serious injury or death.

If levels exceed 10 mg/L, use an alternate water source and contact a licensed well contractor to investigate possible contamination.

Arsenic (Test At Least Once)

Arsenic occurs naturally in some groundwater but can pose serious health risks over time.

Long-term exposure is associated with:

- Various cancers (bladder, liver, lung)
- Cardiovascular disease
- Respiratory illness
- Reduced intelligence in children
- Skin discoloration or lesions

Action is strongly recommended if arsenic levels reach 10 micrograms per liter or higher.

While the “Big 5” contaminants represent the most common risks, [other contaminants](#) can affect groundwater in certain situations.

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Lead (Test At Least Once)

Lead exposure can damage the brain, kidneys, and nervous system.

Children under six and pregnant women are particularly vulnerable. Exposure can lead to developmental, behavioral, and learning problems.

If lead is detected:

- Run water 30–60 seconds before use
- Use cold water for drinking and cooking
- Identify and replace the source of lead plumbing if possible

Manganese (Test At Least Once)

Manganese can affect neurological development.

High levels may cause problems with:

- Memory
- Attention
- Motor skills
- Learning and behavior in infants and children

Levels above 100 µg/L are unsafe for infants, and levels above 300 µg/L may be hazardous for others.

After a Disaster: Check Your Well

Floods, storms, or other disasters can damage wells and introduce contaminants into the water supply.

If a disaster affects your well:

- Turn off power to the well area.
- Inspect the area for physical hazards.
- Check the well casing and surrounding ground for damage.
- Contact licensed professionals for any repairs.
- Assume the water is unsafe until it has been tested.

After any repairs or disinfection, always retest the water to confirm it is safe.



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