

TURBIDITY & WELL WATER

What is Turbidity?

Turbidity is the measure of cloudiness of a liquid, like the way smoke can make air appear cloudy. Turbidity in water is caused by large numbers of suspended organic and inorganic particles, such as sediments or microscopic organisms. These particles are picked up as water moves through rock and soil, and into your groundwater supply.

High turbidity levels can shield harmful microbiological contaminants from the effects of drinking water disinfection and some treatment devices like ultraviolet (UV) lights. Therefore, it is imperative to keep turbidity levels low when treating your water.

What are the health effects of Turbidity?

Turbidity has no direct health effects. However, high levels of turbidity may indicate the presence of disease-causing organisms including bacteria, parasites, and viruses which can cause nausea, cramps, diarrhea, and associated headaches.

If you suspect contamination or experience illness, stop drinking and cooking with the water immediately, and do not resume until testing has proven it to be safe to use. Always seek advice of your medical doctor if you have any health concerns.

How do I test for Turbidity?

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has set the drinking water standard for turbidity at 1 NTU (nephelometric turbidity unit) for public water systems. Well owners should use the EPA's standard as a guideline.

An NTU is the measurement of light that passes through a sample of water; the more particles that are in the water, the higher the NTU number. Most well owners will not notice high turbidity at levels at or below 5 NTU in their drinking water. However, health standards are much lower.

If your water looks cloudy, you should have your water tested for turbidity. If you are considering installing a water treatment system, it is imperative to have comprehensive water testing done. Contact your state or local health department or use our [interactive map](#) for a list of state-certified laboratories in your area.

What are the treatments for Turbidity in drinking water?

To reduce turbidity in water, the Water Quality Association (WQA) recommends using products certified for particulate reduction to NSF/ANSI Standard 42 or products certified for turbidity reduction to NSF/ANSI Standard 53 or 58. To find treatment systems that are certified visit [NSF](#) or [Water Quality Association \(WQA\)](#) websites. It is necessary to maintain treatment devices as specified by the manufacturer or your water treatment professional. You should also retest your water after treatment is installed and after maintenance to confirm the effectiveness of the device.

Contact a certified water treatment professional for guidance. To locate a certified water treatment professional in your area, visit [WQA's website](#).

For More Information on Turbidity and Well Water

Contact your licensed well contractor, local health department, certified water treatment professional, or the wellcare® Hotline for more information on Turbidity.



Information to help maintain and protect your water well system:

wellcare® is a program of the Water Systems Council (WSC). WSC is the only national organization solely focused on protecting the health and water supply of an estimated 23 million households nationwide who depend on private wells (according to the U.S. EPA).

This publication is one of more than 100 wellcare® information sheets available FREE at www.watersystemscouncil.org.

Well owners and others with questions about wells and well water can contact the wellcare® Hotline at 1-888-395-1033 or visit www.wellcarehotline.org to fill out a contact form or chat with us live!

JOIN THE WELLCARE® WELL OWNERS NETWORK!

By joining the FREE wellcare® Well Owners Network, you will receive regular information on how to maintain your well and protect your well water.

Contact us at 1-888-395-1033 or visit www.wellcarehotline.org to join!