

wellcare® information for you about

WELL WATER TESTING

Testing your well water is important to ensure your water quality is safe for you and your family. Private well owners are solely responsible for the quality of their drinking water, so it is up to you to decide when and how to test your water. This information sheet provides guidance on well water testing.

Recommended Testing

At a minimum, your water should be tested every year for bacteria, anything of local concern, or any contaminants that you are monitoring from previous test results.

The table on the following page describes some conditions that may prompt you to test for select contaminants. For example, if your well is in an area of intensive agricultural use, test for nitrates and pesticides commonly used in that region. If household tests of radon in the air are high, test for radon in the water. If you have problems with taste, odor, staining, or color of your water, then test levels of iron, manganese, sulfate, and tannin.

Testing more than once a year may be warranted in special situations:

- Someone in your household is pregnant or nursing
- There are unexplained illnesses in the family
- Your neighbors find a dangerous contaminant in their water
- You note a change in water taste, odor, color, or clarity
- There is a spill of chemicals or fuels near your well

If you have a situation that is mentioned above, follow comprehensive testing recommendations below or call the [wellcare® Hotline at 888-395-1033](tel:888-395-1033) for assistance on what to test for.

Comprehensive Testing

If you have noticed a change in your water or you have not tested in several years, do a comprehensive test to find out if there are any contaminants of concern. Even if there is no contaminant found, this will give you a baseline that you can check against future test results.

Tests for Specific Conditions

Conditions of Surroundings	Recommended Tests
Cloudy, frothy, or colored water	Coliform bacteria, chloride, hardness, iron, pH, sodium, tannins, turbidity
Coal or mining operations	Boron, metals, pH, Total Dissolved Solids (TDS)
Corrosion of pipes, blue-green colored water or stains, metallic taste	Alkalinity, chloride, copper, hardness, iron, lead, manganese, pH, sodium, sulfate, zinc
Dump, landfill, factory or dry-cleaning operation nearby	Metals, pH, PFAS, salts, Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs)
Gas drilling (fracking) operations nearby	Barium, chloride, methane, sodium, strontium
Gasoline or fuel odor	Gas or oil indicators or VOCs
Gastrointestinal illness	Total coliform, E. coli, fecal coliform, cryptosporidium, giardia, legionella
Household plumbing and/or well casing is metal	Alkalinity, chloride, copper, hardness, iron, lead, manganese, pH, sodium, sulfate, zinc
Intensive agriculture	Arsenic, coliform bacteria, nitrate, pesticides
Radon present in indoor air or region	Gross alpha and beta or radium plus radon, uranium
Rapid wear of water appliances including treatment devices	Chloride, hardness, iron, manganese, pH, sodium
Salty taste, heavily salted roadway nearby	Boron, chloride, sodium, total dissolved solids (TDS)
Scaly residue, soaps won't lather	Chloride, hardness, sodium
Slimy residue, jelly-like substance	Chloride, iron bacteria, pseudomonas, pH, silica, sodium
Stained laundry, plumbing, water appliances	Iron, manganese, sulfate, tannins
Unpleasant taste or smell	Coliform bacteria, iron, manganese, sulfate, tannins
Water softener to treat hardness (before purchase)	Chloride, hardness, iron, manganese, pH, sodium, sulfate, turbidity

It is important to note that these are only some tests that may be recommended. Contact the wellcare® Hotline for further assistance at 888-395-1033.

Water Samples

You will need to collect water samples for the laboratory you choose to test your water. The laboratory usually provides specific sampling instructions and clean bottles in which to collect the water sample. Do not rinse lab containers or fill them to overflowing. Check to see if the sample must be refrigerated or treated with special chemicals.

You may need to take a sample from the tap with the first flush of water in the morning or after the tap has been allowed to run for a period of time. If you suspect a problem somewhere in your home plumbing, you may need to take samples from several points, such as before and after water enters the hot water tank or at the inlet and outlet of a treatment device.

Again, carefully follow the instructions provided by the laboratory. We have provided an example at right for taking samples. Sampling is the most important part of testing. A carelessly collected sample can give you inaccurate results.

Finding a Testing Lab

We have provided water testing resources for each U.S. state and Canadian province to assist well owners in those areas obtain lists of certified water testing laboratories. These lists can be found by using our [interactive map](#) or calling the wellcare® Hotline at 888-395-1033.

Check with individual laboratories to get prices. Ask how soon you should expect results and about the information that will be provided with your test results.

To Collect Most Water Samples

Always follow laboratory directions carefully to ensure the accuracy of the test.

Step 1: Identify the collection point (for example, the kitchen sink).

Step 2: Remove the washer and aeration device from the faucet. This is usually required depending on the type of water test(s) you are having performed.



Step 3: Disinfect the faucet with either isopropyl alcohol or bleach and let it stand for 4-5 minutes. Some states or counties require that you use a flame to superheat the metal to disinfect it.

Step 4: Turn the water on and allow it to run until there is a noticeable change in temperature or until you've ensured the well pump has come on and started to fill the tank (about 5 minutes).



Step 5: Reduce the flow of water and fill your container according to the laboratory's instructions being careful not to touch the inside of the bottle or cap.



Step 6: Close the sample container and transport or mail it as instructed by the laboratory.

Understanding Your Results

Laboratories may provide your results in a variety of forms sometimes called an Analysis Report, Certificate of Analysis, Client Sample Results, Report of Analysis, or Sample Results. It may be a computer printout that is mailed to you or provided electronically through email. On the report, you may see general information about the laboratory that performs the testing, the specific tests you requested, the results, unit used to measure the contaminant, symbols and abbreviations.

The important question is whether the contaminant found poses a threat to your health at the level it was found. Many contaminants do not pose a threat to health, but can cause the water to change color, cause staining, have an odor or an unpleasant taste. Use our wellcare® information sheet [***Understanding Your Well Water Test Results***](#) or contact the wellcare® Hotline at 888-395-1033 or info@wellcarehotline.org to help with interpreting your results.

For More Information on Well Water Testing

Contact the [wellcare® Hotline at 888-395-1033](tel:888-395-1033) or info@wellcarehotline.org or visit our websites at www.wellcarehotline.org and www.watersystemscouncil.org.



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 more than 13 million households nationwide who depend on private wells.

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!