

# Private Well Water Testing



## Why Test?

Well water is unregulated, and most contaminants are colorless and odorless. The only way to know if the water is safe is to test! As a private well owner, YOU are responsible for the quality of your drinking water.

## Common Contaminants

- Coliform Bacteria is very common - about 40% of wells sampled test positive for bacteria.
- Arsenic is naturally occurring and comes from shale in bedrock; about 18% of samples are elevated or have unsafe levels of arsenic.
- Nitrates can come from fertilizers, sewage or erosion of natural deposits. They can pose serious health problems in pregnant women and infants, such as blue baby syndrome.

## When to Test

- Annually for bacteria
- Every 3-5 years for heavy metals
- If you notice a change in taste, color, or odor
- If someone in the home has a sudden or unexplained illness
- When flooding occurs near the well
- If pregnant/nursing women or children live in the home

## State Dept of Health Tests For the Following

1. Bacteria (E. coli and Total Coliforms) \$10
2. Anions (Nitrite, Chloride, Fluoride, Sulfate, Phosphate) \$10
3. Metals (Arsenic, Lead, Mercury, Copper) \$20

## What if My Water is Unsafe to Drink

The State Dept of Health will send a final report that shows the levels in your drinking water compared to any health standards. It is not the policy of SCHD to 'condemn' wells or require treatment system installation for owner-occupied homes, but instead offers recommendations for treatment. For example, if bacteria are present, SCHD can provide step-by-step instructions on how to disinfect your well, and then it can be retested.



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## Well Maintenance

- Visually inspect the well head including the casing, well cap, and electrical conduit throughout the year
- Ensure the well cap is intact and secured to the well head