

## Safe Water Quality is Straightforward

Safe, clean drinking water is the most essential building block to a healthy life. Understanding the risk associated with the quality of your well water is important. Because the body requires ample water, removing pollutants and hazardous substances before drinking is important.

### Who is at the greatest risk?

- Newborns and infants
- Pregnant women and unborn children
- Young children and adolescents
- Immunosuppressed and immunodeficient
- Elderly



*Annual testing may prevent your family from drinking unhealthy water!*

## Positive Test Results

When a private water source has elevated levels of contamination, the individual using the water source is responsible for taking action.

If results from water testing are positive for contamination, bottled or filtered water may be used as a short-term solution. In some cases, boiling water and sanitization of a well may provide a solution.

Long-term clean water can be achieved through different means, including: treatment and sanitation, switching water supplies to municipal water or constructing a new well.



**Contact for Additional Support:  
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# Private WELL WATER TESTING

*A Guide to Testing Private Wells for  
Safe, Healthy Drinking Water*



**Indiana  
Department  
of  
Health**

# 1 - Knowledge

Knowing the risk associated with your water is the first step to achieving healthy, clean water. Oftentimes, well water pollutants are colorless and odorless, making detection at home difficult. Water with discoloration or odor may be safe to drink, yet clear, tasteless water may have elevated risk.

# 2 - Testing

Test your water every year to know you are drinking safe, healthy water. Because of the changing status of water quality, the Indiana Department of Health (IDOH) recommends, at a minimum, annual testing of private wells.

The IDOH Health Laboratories manages the certification of drinking water laboratories that specialize in testing for pollutants.

## Certified Drinking Laboratories in Indiana:

<http://in.gov/isdh/24859.htm>

### *Determine what testing your water needs*

Based on the risk identified, unique testing may be required. Contacting the IDOH Certified Drinking Water Laboratory in your area is the best way to make sure you understand what tests to do, how to collect your water sample, how long it will take the laboratory to return test results and the total cost for sample analysis. Specialists at the testing laboratory will provide details on the sampling containers, how much to send, and additional important information.

IDOH Health Laboratories offers testing for:

- **Bacteriology**
- **Total Nitrate - Nitrite**
- **Fluoride**
- **Metals - Lead, Copper & Arsenic**

## *Know what can pollute your water:*

- **Bacteria & Nitrates**
  - Typically found in human and animal waste
  - Released from failing septic systems, large herds of animals
  - Other sources: sanitary and garbage landfills
- **Flooding and Natural Disasters**
  - Sanitization may be needed to eliminate disease growth in wells after flooding events
  - Extreme drought may concentrate contamination and limit water production.
- **Fertilizers, Pesticides & Herbicides**
  - Used to promote agriculture growth, minimize insect damage, reduce weeds
- **Lead, Copper, Arsenic & Heavy Metals**
  - Water without a neutral pH of 7 may strip metal from plumbing fixtures in the home
  - Naturally occurring rock deposits may leach heavy metals, including arsenic, into well water.
- **Household Wastes**
  - Improper disposal of used motor oil, paint, cleaning solvents, soaps, and detergents
- **Industrial & Hazardous Wastes**
  - Factories and small businesses such as gas stations and dry cleaners
  - Leaking underground tanks and piping
  - Mining and construction by-products
  - Chemical petroleum production sites
  - Brown fields, abandoned industrial areas

# 3 - Engagement

Your private well water is unregulated, yet there is plenty of support to answer questions, provide guidance, and help understand testing results. Mastering your water quality is no easy task, but many free resources are available to help you. The following organizations are available in your community to help provide guidance in maintaining clean, healthy drinking water from your private well:

- Local or county health department
- Indiana Department of Health
- Purdue Extension Service
- Alliance or Indiana Rural Water
- Indiana Rural Water Association

*Private well water is unregulated by both the IDEM and EPA. Well owners are responsible for their own safety when drinking from a private water well.*

## *Is your drinking water regulated?*

The *Safe Drinking Water Act of 1974* (SDWA) is the federal law that protects public drinking water supplies throughout the United States.

This regulation allows for the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to maintain oversight of drinking water supplied as a utility in communities both large and small. The SDWA does not regulate private water from wells serving fewer than 25 individuals or 15 service connections.

Through the SDWA, chemicals and other materials are regulated based on the associated risk to human health. The Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM) and the EPA are responsible for insuring water utilities supply clean, healthy water to all Hoosiers