FOR MORE INFORMATION

In the event of a community water system experiencing elevated levels of any contaminants, contact your local health department for assistance. You should take action if your water exceeds the levels established by the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP).

Water-quality standards found in state or federal standards call for a detailed test after any well repair. The test must be conducted within one week of the repair. DEP recommends testing one week after a repair.

What the Tests Tell You

1. Chloride
2. Fluoride
3. Iron
4. Lead
5. Nitrate
6. Pesticides
7. Shunt
8. Total Coliform
9. Total Nitrogen
10. Total Phosphorus

When testing any sample, DEP recommends:

- Collect a sample from the tap nearest to the source of the water.
- Collect a minimum of 10 gallons of water.
- Allow the water to run for at least one minute.
- Use a clean, clear, and wide-mouth container.
- Label the container with the date of collection and other relevant information.

Properly stored, the sample should be analyzed by your local health department or a certified laboratory within 48 hours. If the test results show that the water contains any contaminants, contact your health department for further action.
Private Wells
If you have a private well, then water quality testing should be important to you and your family.

Some contaminants in drinking water have been linked to cancer and toxicity, posing a risk to human health. Many contaminants often have no taste, odor, or color. Their presence can only be determined by laboratory testing.

While there is no state requirement to have your well water tested (although there may be from your mortgage lender or local Board of Health), the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) recommends that all homeowners with private wells do so, and use a state certified laboratory.

Contamination of Wells
Well water originates as rain and snow that then filters into the ground. As it soaks through the soil, the water can dissolve materials that are present on or in the ground, becoming contaminated.

Some contaminants are naturally occurring from features found in the rocks and soils of Massachusetts. These include substances like bacteria, radon, arsenic, uranium, and other minerals.

Other contaminants find their way onto the land from human activities. On a large scale, industrial/commercial activities, improper waste disposal, road salting, and fuel spills can introduce hazardous substances to the ground. However, even typical residential activities, such as the application of fertilizers and pesticides, fueling of lawn equipment, and disposal of household chemicals can contaminate the ground when done improperly. Even an on-site residential septic system can pose a threat to your well. That is why taking measures to protect your well from contamination is so important.

Recommended Tests
The following tests provide only the most basic indicators of a well’s water quality. These tests identify some of the common natural and man-made contaminants found in our state’s well water. However, you should also consider nearby land uses to decide whether additional tests are appropriate for your well. It is not necessary to do all of the tests at one time.

- Standard Analysis
This basic analysis covers the most common contaminants. Some of these contaminants pose health-related concerns, while others only affect aesthetics (taste and odor).

- Radon
Radon can be a well water problem in Massachusetts, especially in bedrock wells. Presently, there are no federal or state standards for radon in drinking water, only suggested action levels. [Note: If Radon levels are elevated in your well water, you should also consider checking your indoor radon levels.]

- Gross Alpha Screen
Radioactive minerals, such as radium and uranium, may be dissolved in well water. A Gross Alpha Screen is a simple test to judge whether further testing for specific radioactive minerals such as radium or uranium might be needed.

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