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### ***Why should I test my well water ?***

Safe, clean water is one of the most important substances in our lives -- for drinking, cooking, bathing and cleaning. Municipal water systems test their water regularly to ensure it's safe, but it's up to private well owners to test their well water annually. It's one of the simplest things you can do to take care of the health and well-being of yourself and those you love.



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### ***What tests should I have done on my well water ?***

Three important tests for well owners are bacteria, nitrate and fluoride.

**Coliform Bacteria** are micro-organisms that can be found in human and animal waste, in soil, on vegetation and in the surface water runoff. If coliform bacteria are present in your well water, then other

bacteria, viruses and parasites that can make you sick may also be present. Hence, the test is used as an indicator of well water safety.

Coliform bacteria can enter groundwater through poorly constructed or unsealed wells, fractured rock outcroppings, sinkholes, coarse soils and quarries. Insects crawling up under well caps and wells drawing in soil particles through air vents also can contaminate wells.

**If there are infants less than six months of age or pregnant women drinking the well water, you should also test for NITRATE.** Nitrate interferes with the blood's ability to carry oxygen, thus causing symptoms of suffocation or "blue baby syndrome" in infants. This is a very serious medical condition. Pregnant women also should avoid drinking water high in nitrate because recent research suggests connections between high nitrate water, birth defects and miscarriages.

Nitrate can enter drinking water from many sources, including fertilizer, animal feedlots, sewage systems, municipal and industrial wastewater, urban drainage and decaying plant debris. Soil types, bedrock structure

and the direction of groundwater flow also may influence whether nitrate enters into wells.

**Fluoride is a naturally occurring mineral found in water which has been shown to lower the severity of tooth decay.** Dentists and physicians often prescribe a fluoride supplement when drinking water is low in fluoride.

Our division can also recommend other tests that you might want to have run on your water depending on your well's location, age and nearby land use.



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### ***What do I do if the tests show there are problems with my well water ?***

If test results show you have coliform bacteria in your well water, a second sample should be taken to confirm the first result. (Make sure you use proper sampling techniques.) If after retesting, results still indicate your well water has coliform bacteria, contact the Environmental Health Division for information on chlorinating your well. If chlorination

doesn't solve the problem, contact a well driller or pump installer (check the Yellow Pages) for help.

If a high level of nitrate is present in your well, contact a well driller or plumber for assistance.



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### ***When should I test my well water ?***

You should test your well water every year for coliform bacteria. If you are pregnant or have infants less than six months of age, you should also check for nitrate.

You can make the testing part of your normal springtime routine, like planting flowers and resetting your clock for daylight savings time. Water should also be tested after flooding or if you notice any change in taste, odor or appearance.

It's important to test well water annually. Even if your test results are O.K. one year, that doesn't mean your well won't have contamination problems in the future.

**You can order your Water Test Collection Kit for bacteria three ways.**

1. Order by phone for \$28 using Visa/MasterCard. \$25, plus \$3 mailing. *(2013 fees)*
2. Mail a check for \$28 (payable to "Waukesha County") to the Environmental Health Division.
3. Pick up a kit for \$25, Monday-Friday, 8 AM - 4:30 PM. at the Environmental Health Division.

**Test your well water for fluoride or nitrate.** Bring in an eight ounce water sample in a clean container for each test. Turn in the samples on the same day they are collected, Monday-Thursday before 3:30 PM. The cost to test for fluoride or nitrate is \$10 each.

If you have questions on water testing call (262) 896-8300, Monday-Friday, 8 AM - 4:30 PM.

**Water Test Collection Kit Order Form**

Send \_\_\_ bacteria water collection kits at \$28.00 each

Enclose a check payable to "Waukesha County" or complete the Charge Card information. Mail to the Environmental Health Division.

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 City/State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Visa ( ) \_\_\_\_\_ Master Card ( )  
 Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Account # \_\_\_\_\_  
 Exp. Date \_\_\_\_\_

It's your family's health...

What could be more important!



**Waukesha County**  
**Department of Parks & Land Use**  
**Environmental Health Division**  
**515 W. Moreland Blvd. AC 260**  
**Waukesha, WI 53188**

**Telephone # 262-896-8300**  
**Toll Free # 1-800-567-2366**  
**Fax # 262-896-8298**  
**[www.waukeshacounty.gov/eh](http://www.waukeshacounty.gov/eh)**

Technical information provided by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and the University of Wisconsin Central Wisconsin Groundwater Center.

# Test Your Well Water Annually

Take care of what's important to YOU

<u>To Do:</u>	<u>Done</u>
 annual physical	✓
 oil change	✓
 dentist visit	✓
 annual well water test	✓