

Well Water Facts



The Ringwood Health Department encourages homeowners with private wells to have their well tested annually.

DID YOU KNOW?

It is the **responsibility of the well owner** to maintain and treat their well to ensure their water is safe from harmful contaminants (chemicals and bacteria).

The **New Jersey Private Well Testing Act (PWTA)** requires the sellers or the buyers of a property with potable wells to test the untreated well and to review the results *prior* to the closing of title. PWTA also requires landlords to test their private well every five years and to provide each tenant with a copy of the results.

IMPORTANCE OF WATER TESTING

Testing your private well is the only way to make sure that your water remains suitable for household uses. Regular testing is important to:

- Identify Existing Problems
- Ensure Water Is Suitable for the Intended Use
- Track Changes Over Time
- Determine the Effectiveness of a Treatment System



The quality of a water source may change over time or suddenly. Changes can go unnoticed as the water may look, smell, and taste the same.

WHEN TO TEST YOUR PRIVATE WELL

- When purchasing or selling a home
- **Every year** for coliform bacteria, nitrates, and nitrites. Every 3 to 5 years for all other contaminants (see private well testing recommendations on the next page).
- When repairing an existing well or drilling a new well
- If recent floodwaters or runoff covered the wellhead
- If you or your healthcare provider suspect your drinking water could be causing symptoms such as diarrhea or vomiting
- There are changes in your household/family, such as pregnancy, new babies, or changes in someone's overall health.
- You notice changes in how your water looks, smells or tastes.
- You notice changes in land use, such as construction or farming, that could cause runoff to enter your well.
- The well runs dry or the amount of water flowing from your fixtures changes.



Protect Your Family. Test Your Well

“OUR WELL WATER LOOKS, SMELLS, AND TASTES FINE. WHY SHOULD WE TEST IT?”

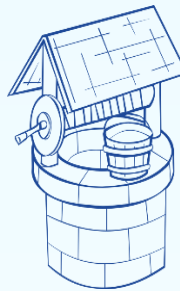
Nitrate and coliform bacteria, the most common contaminants in wells, has no taste, color, or smell so their presence can only be determined by laboratory testing.



These contaminants can be harmful to you, your family and pet. Babies, children, pregnant women, older adults and people with health conditions are most at risk of health effects from consuming contaminated water.

Unsafe levels of these chemicals and bacteria may cause illnesses such as diarrhea and baby blue syndrome or increase your risk of cancer.

IS MY WELL AT RISK?



Presence of fecal coliform or nitrates in your private well are indicators of a possible septic contamination due to a malfunctioning septic system. Common sources of nitrate include nitrogen fertilizers, manure, and sewage treatment practices.

The following types of wells are the most vulnerable to nitrate contamination: shallow wells, wells in sand aquifers, dug wells, wells with damaged or leaking casing.

CONTAMINANTS IN YOUR WATER?

Stop using your water and use bottled water for drinking or cooking if water tests show contaminants in your private well or if you suspect your well could be contaminated. Do not attempt to remove the nitrate by boiling the water. This will only increase the nitrate concentration.

For more information, call the Ringwood Health Department at (973) 962-7079.

Additional information is available at the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) website: www.nj.gov/dep/dsr/pwta/



PRIVATE WELL TESTING RECOMMENDATIONS



It is important that owners of private wells have their systems **routinely** inspected and tested for biological and chemical contaminants so that any problems with their water supply are addressed.

Always use a State Certified Laboratory that conducts private well testing. Certification means that the laboratory has been deemed capable of performing accurate testing and of producing valid data for tests of specified contaminants. Contact the Ringwood Health Department for a list of certified labs and additional information.

CONTAMINANT (Most Common)

HEALTH EFFECTS

SAFE LIMIT

Test Every Year

- Coliform Bacteria Diarrhea and Vomiting 0
If result is positive,
test for E. coli bacteria
- Nitrate Nitrogen Infant blood problems 10 mg/L or less
- Nitrite Nitrogen Infant blood problems 1 mg/L or less

Test Every 3 to 5 Years

- Arsenic Cancer (bladder, lung, skin) 5 ug/L or less
- Fluoride Low: tooth decay Between 0.6 mg/L
High level: stained teeth and 1.7 mg/L
- Lead Damage to brain, kidneys, and 15 ug/L or less
If planning a baby, pregnant,
or have a child under age 6 nervous system
- Gross Alpha Radiation Increased cancer risk 15 (pCi/L) or less
- Radon Cancer (stomach, lung)..... 4,000 pCi/L or less
- Uranium Kidney Problems 30 ug/L or less

Tips for Restoring and Testing Your Private Well

- Regularly check and maintain the well, system components and area around the well for damage.
- Repair, flush, or disinfect your well. Consider contacting licensed well contractors.
- Treatment methods are available that can reduce the levels of nitrate in the drinking water supply, but some methods may be more appropriate or cost-effective than others.
- If you suspect your well could be contaminated by gasoline, heating oil or chemicals, contact the Ringwood Health Department.
- Contact the health department for advice on maintaining, testing, disinfecting, and flushing your well.
- Keep records of maintenance activities and water testing.
- Take steps to get connected to a public water system if you have the opportunity. Public water is the best option for household water because it is regularly monitored and managed by a certified water operator.

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