

Fluoride

Fluoride in water helps prevent tooth decay in children. Generally we have low levels of fluoride in our well water but parents should always test before giving fluoride supplements to their children. Both fluoride testing and supplements are available at the health department at no cost to Dunn County residents.

Water Testing

Your well water can be easily tested for some known sources of contamination.

BACTERIA testing should be done yearly, or whenever there is a change in taste, color or odor or unexplained gastrointestinal illness.

NITRATE testing should be done when you buy or are renting a home with a well, before pregnancy and at the time of birth, and annually if previous test results show levels near 10 ppm. Annual testing is also recommended if you live near animal feed lots or fertilized fields.

FLUORIDE testing should be done when an infant is born.

LEAD testing should be done when you have a home with old plumbing, especially if you have naturally soft water.

If you suspect other more unlikely contaminants like **METALS**, **PESTICIDES**, **VOC's**, **PCB's**, or **RADON** in your water, consult the resources that follow or the Health Department.

Resources

Environmental Protection Agency:
<http://water.epa.gov/drink/info/well/>

Wisconsin Department of Health:
<http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/wells/>

National Groundwater Association:
<http://wellowner.org/>

Scan this code with your smart phone to direct you to the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources website on wells



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Dunn County Health Department

3001 US Hwy 12 E, Suite 032
Menomonie, WI 54751
715-232-2388

Dunn County Health Department



WATER

Well Water Basics & Testing

Environmental Health

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Well Water Basics

Private water wells have changed from crude holes dug in the ground to systems designed to bring high quality, safe water for cleaning and drinking. It is important to become familiar with your well, its placement, construction, and maintenance, for all those who rely on a healthy source of water.

In our area we have one *aquifer*, or underground source for our water. Wells are designed to carry water from this source, without contamination, to the faucets of our homes. Whenever there are failures in this system there may be consequences to the health of those who rely on that water. These failures may be caused by breaks or openings in the casing and/or contamination of the surrounding soil from various environmental sources.

There may also be characteristics of the water source that, although they pose no health threat, do affect the odor and/or taste or other problems within the plumbing system.



Common Well Problems

The most common well problems come from bacteria and/or nitrates getting into the well water.

BACTERIA

Each opening in a well whether for service or a break in the casing or electrical conduit allows for bacteria to enter the well. Although many kinds of bacteria may not harm you their presence indicates the possibility for harmful bacteria like *e. coli* to enter your system. The Health Department can help with wells that test positive for bacteria.

NITRATES

Unlike bacteria, nitrates are chemicals that are naturally present in some soil types but can also enter the well through contamination from agricultural sources. In high enough levels they can pose life threatening risks to infants under 6 months of age and may cause birth defects. High nitrates may also pose other risks to older children and adults. Boiling water with high nitrates does not make the water safe to drink but increases the amount of nitrates. Although more difficult to fix, there are ways to reduce the nitrate exposure.

Other Contaminants

HARDNESS, ODOR, STAINS, are all examples of water problems that, although not health issues, can occur in some wells. These problems are the result of high mineral content, sulfur, and/or iron in the well water and can be helped to some degree by water treatment or filtration. Check with your water treatment professionals for help.

Although unlikely, there are other contaminants like **METALS** that could be present in well water and could pose a risk, especially for young infants and children. Other rare contaminants include spills of pesticides, fertilizers, fuel oil and other solvent products. For more information refer to the resources listed.

