

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT WELL WATER DRINKING SUPPLIES

Q: Who is responsible for maintaining a well?

A: The well owner (owner of land upon which a well is situated) is responsible for maintaining the well in accordance with Regulation 903 <https://www.ontario.ca/laws/regulation/900903>. Licensed well technicians should be contacted to perform work on a well.

Q: How often should I sample my well?

A: Well water may not look, smell or taste any different but bacteria may be present. The only way you know your water is safe is to test it. The Health Unit recommends taking a series of samples over several weeks during the spring and fall when there is a likelihood of runoff from heavy rain events and melting snow. Fluctuating test results indicate that your well water supply is not secure and you should consult a licensed well technician to assess your well to determine if the situation can be rectified.

Q: When should I disinfect my well?

A: Wells must be disinfected and tested following:

- the construction of a new well
- any work completed on a well i.e. changing foot valve or pump
- flooding
- an unsatisfactory test result and a repeat unsatisfactory result
- any level of e.coli in your sample results
- any work completed on plumbing or following installation of a water treatment system

It is important to remember that well disinfection is not the same as treatment. If you continue to have unsatisfactory results following disinfection, a treatment system to continuously treat your water is likely required.

Q: What kind of treatment system do I need?

A: The water supply in wells can vary and there are many parameters that can affect the operation of a treatment system. What is required in one home may differ from what is required in a neighbouring home. Consideration for the hardness of water, turbidity, flow etc. and what you are treating the water for help inform what type of water treatment system is appropriate for your well water. This process is somewhat complex and therefore the Health Unit recommends that you **consult a water treatment specialist to evaluate what is needed to treat your well water**. There are several options for water treatment available and they will be able to recommend one to meet your needs.

Water treatment systems are described as “point of use” or “whole home” treatment units. The difference is that a “point of use” system will treat water at one tap only, so the remainder of water running through the plumbing of the home remains untreated. A whole home treatment system is usually located following the pressure tank and treats the water prior to distribution through the plumbing, so safe water flows from every plumbing fixture in the home.

Ultraviolet lights are effective in treating bacterial contamination; however they are not a stand-alone unit and require filters prior to the UV light component and may require the use of a water softener. Ultra violet light treatment units must be sized to accommodate the flow of water. These systems require maintenance as do all treatment systems.

Q. Do I still need to test my water if I have a treatment system installed?

A. Installation of a treatment system does not mean you no longer have to test your well. Periodic testing confirms that the treatment unit is working as required. All samples taken following treatment must always be clear of all bacteria, even a low count indicates the unit requires maintenance and the drinking water must be boiled until this is completed and a clear test result is received.

Q. What can I do to reduce the risks of contamination to my well water supply?

A. Each property owner is responsible for their well, what you do on your property can affect the quality of the water in your community. The following tips will help protect your drinking water:

- Ensure you have a vermin proof cap securely on your well
- Ensure you direct surface runoff from your property away from the well
- Ensure your casing is raised up above the ground
- Ensure the soil area around the well casing is raised to divert water away from the well
- Avoid planting plants around the well
- Clean up pet droppings on your property and do not tie pets up in the area around the well
- Store chemicals and household products safely in labeled and sealed containers to prevent leakage
- Maintain your septic system if you have one
- Sample your well regularly to identify problems early and take action to protect your health. Bottles and testing are free!

Q. Where can I get more information on what my test results mean?

A. Public Health Inspectors are available to help interpret your results and provide advice. You may call the Health Unit Monday- Friday 8:30 AM to 4:30 PM by dialing 1-800-660-5853. Please request the duty desk. The Health Unit website also has information and helpful links please follow the following link: <https://healthunit.org/health-information/drinking-water/>