If the concentration of arsenic is higher than 0.010 mg/l, it is not recommended to use the water for:

- drinking;
- preparing beverages such as coffee, juice or baby formula;
- preparing food such as soups or rice;
- cooking food in water.

It is not necessary to boil the water. Not only arsenic does not evaporate but boiling could actually increase its concentration in water.

There are several water treatment devices that can reduce the level of arsenic in well water. It is best to consult a company that specializes in this field to find out the most appropriate type of treatment for your situation. Some companies can do tests to help you decide.

Be sure to install a device that has been NSF/ANSI certified and make sure you follow the manufacturer’s instructions regarding their use and maintenance.

You must proceed with the analysis of the treated water once the device is installed to verify its effectiveness.

Once a year, the water should be analyzed to ensure that the system remains effective.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION ABOUT WATER TREATMENT, YOU CAN CONSULT THE MINISTÈRE DU DÉVELOPPEMENT DURABLE, DE L’ENVIRONNEMENT ET DE LA LUTTE CONTRE LES CHANGEMENTS CLIMATIQUES WEB PAGE: « PURIFICATEUR D’EAU : PRENDRE LA BONNE DÉCISION »

To learn more about risks related to arsenic or more information about drinking water and health:

Centre intégré universitaire de santé et de services sociaux de l’Estrie – Centre hospitalier universitaire de Sherbrooke
Direction de santé publique
819 829-3400, ext.: 42005

USEFUL LINKS

Ministère du Développement durable, de l’Environnement et de la Lutte contre les changements climatiques
www.mddelcc.gouv.qc.ca

Centre intégré universitaire de santé et de services sociaux de l’Estrie – Centre hospitalier universitaire de Sherbrooke
www.santeestrie.qc.ca/ea
What are the health impacts of arsenic?

Just because arsenic is a naturally occurring substance does not mean that it does not pose a threat to health! Arsenic found in drinking water is readily absorbed by the digestive system. Prolonged exposure to arsenic in drinking water increases the risk of:
- skin cancer;
- cancer of various internal organs (lungs, bladder);
- poor blood circulation (feet and hands).

Moreover, recent studies suggest a possible effect on reproduction and child development.

The risk of developing health problems increases as a person drinks a large quantity of water that contains unacceptably high levels of arsenic over a long period of time.

The current data suggest that the following groups may be more vulnerable to the effects of arsenic:
- smokers (carcinogenic effects)
- pregnant women and bottle-fed infants (effects on child development)

How do you know if the water in your well is contaminated?

Arsenic has no colour, no taste and no specific odour. The only way to know if the water in your well contains arsenic is to send a water sample for testing at a certified laboratory accredited by the Ministère du Développement durable, de l’Environnement et de la Lutte contre les changements climatiques.

What is the acceptable limit for arsenic in drinking water?

The World Health Organization and Health Canada recommend that the threshold should not exceed 0.010 mg/L.

What is arsenic?

It is a chemical element found naturally in the soil. Arsenic is a carcinogenic substance that affects humans.

How does arsenic get into drinking water?

Arsenic can dissolve into groundwater and contaminate it. Where water is provided by a water system, managers watch for evidence of arsenic.

The cost of the test for arsenic varies from about $30 to $40 and the results will be ready in one to two weeks.

For a small additional charge, the laboratories have a transportation system for the bottles.

The following laboratories are accredited in the region:

- Groupe Environex
  1 877 977-1220
  www.labvironex.com
- Biovet (Saint-Hyacinthe)
  450 771-7291
  www.biovet.ca

The complete list of accredited laboratories in the province is available on the Ministère du Développement durable, de l’Environnement et de la Lutte contre les changements climatiques website.