



## Should I have the water in my well tested?

WHY?

### WHERE AND WHEN CAN I GET MY WATER TESTED?

As the owner of a well, it is up to you to have your water tested so you can be sure that your water is safe to drink. The test should be done by a laboratory accredited by the ministère du Développement durable, de l'Environnement et de la Lutte aux changements climatiques.

List of the accredited laboratories :

#### GROUPE ENVIRONEX

1 877 977-1220

[www.labenvironex.com](http://www.labenvironex.com)

#### BIOVET (Saint-Hyacinthe)

450 771-7291

[www.biovet.ca](http://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.

It is still recommended to test water for bacterial contamination twice a year (in spring and fall) and when a change in taste, odor or appearance of water occurs. Moreover, a water analysis is advised when work is performed on the well or nearby. Testing for nitrates is especially important if you live in an agricultural area.

### WHICH CONTAMINANTS SHOULD I TEST FOR?

#### Bacteria

Your water should not contain any fecal coliform. The presence of fecal coliform bacteria and in particular *E. coli* bacteria in your water means that your well is contaminated by an external source of fecal material (manure being spread, septic tank, etc.). If you drink this water, you may encounter health problems such as gastroenteritis.

If your water is contaminated, it is important to disinfect the well, and to try to find the source of contamination (Is the well sealed against infiltration of outside water? Is there a septic tank nearby? etc.) and take the appropriate corrective measures.

Water which has been contaminated by fecal coliform bacteria is **unfit for consumption**.

If it is contaminated, **you can boil the water** hard for at least a minute before drinking it, or use bottled water until your well has been disinfected. Only when a new test shows that the water is safe to drink again should you use it.



#### NITRATES

The presence of nitrates in water is often related to inappropriate spreading of fertilizer or manure near wells. For children less than 6 months of age, nitrates absorbed could cause a decrease in the quantity of oxygen carried in the blood.

The maximum acceptable concentration of nitrates in drinking water is 10 milligrammes per litre (mg/l). If the concentration of nitrates in your water is higher, you should not drink it on a regular basis. Furthermore, babies under 6 months of age and pregnant women should not consume it at all.

If the level of nitrates in your water is higher than 3 mg/l, it is important to identify the source of contamination so you can correct or improve the situation.

## WHY SHOULD YOU HAVE YOUR WELL WATER TESTED?

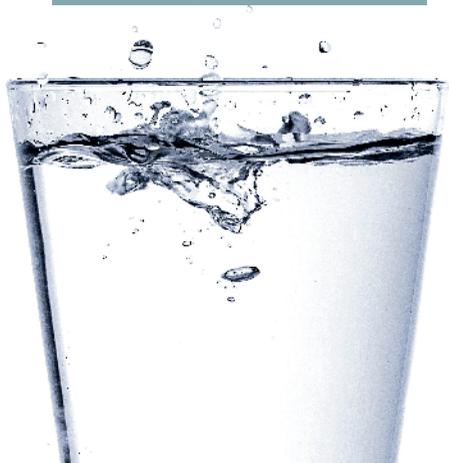
Some people believe, incorrectly, that because well water is natural, it is safe.

However, most of the time, contamination, whether microbiological or chemical does not change the :

- **taste of water;**
- **smell of water;**
- **the colour of water.**

Even if you are not sick, this does not mean that your water is not contaminated.

The only way to be sure if your water is safe to drink is to have it tested for microbiological and chemical content.



## ARSENIC

Arsenic is a natural element found in the ground where it may dissolve; it is, therefore, found in ground water.

The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends that the level of arsenic in drinking water not exceed 0,010 mg/l.

Exposure to arsenic in drinking water over a number of years increases the risk of various cancers (skin, bladder, lung) and can cause circulatory problems.

If your water contains more than 0,010 mg/l of arsenic, it is recommended that you not boil it, nor use it in preparing food or beverages (juice, coffee, etc.).

If you install a water treatment system to reduce arsenic concentration, it is recommended that you have the water tested once a year to make sure the treatment is still effective.



## OTHER CONTAMINANTS

Many other chemicals, occurring naturally or by chance, can be found in water. Some may cause problems that are merely aesthetic (spots on clothing, etc.), but others can be harmful to health.

If your water has an unpleasant taste or smell, you should contact an accredited laboratory. If you suspect a source of chemical contamination, you should call the public health department in your region to ask for their suggestions about tests.

If it is impossible to correct or halt the contamination in the short term, you should be consider installing a water treatment system or use bottled water.

It is important to remember that chemicals such as arsenic and nitrates do not evaporate. Boiling water, therefore, does not help to solve the problem, as it does for contamination caused by microorganisms. It is necessary to eliminate the source of contamination or to install a water treatment system.

## WHERE CAN I FIND ADDITIONAL INFORMATION?

For more information about drinking water and your health, please contact:  
**DIRECTION DE SANTÉ PUBLIQUE DE L'ESTRIE**  
at  
**819 829-3400, poste 42005**  
you can also visit these websites :

**PORTAIL SANTÉ MIEUX-ÊTRE**  
[www.sante.gouv.qc.ca](http://www.sante.gouv.qc.ca)

**CENTRE INTÉGRÉ UNIVERSITAIRE DE SANTÉ  
ET DE SERVICES SOCIAUX DE L'ESTRIE -  
CENTRE HOSPITALIER UNIVERSITAIRE  
DE SHERBROOKE**  
[www.santeestrie.qc.ca/eau](http://www.santeestrie.qc.ca/eau)

**MINISTÈRE DU DÉVELOPPEMENT DURABLE,  
DE L'ENVIRONNEMENT ET DE LA LUTTE  
CONTRE LES CHANGEMENTS CLIMATIQUES**  
[www.mddelcc.gouv.qc.ca](http://www.mddelcc.gouv.qc.ca)

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