



Drinking Water Fact Kit

Protecting Well Water Supplies

NSF International is an independent, not-for-profit public health organization that writes public health standards for food, water and consumer products. NSF also tests and certifies products to make sure they meet these standards. NSF has a 65-year history of protecting public health, safety and environment worldwide and is a World Health Organization Collaborating Centre for Food and Water Safety and Indoor Environment. NSF developed the American national public health standards for materials and products coming into contact with drinking water and all chemicals used to treat drinking water. NSF has also developed seven standards for drinking water treatment products, such as filters, faucet mounts and under sink varieties.

Consumers with private well water supplies shouldn't take the quality of their water for granted. Depending upon the depth of the well and the condition of the well housing and other components, it is possible for outside contaminants to affect the safety of the well water supply.

Below are some simple safety tips to help better protect well water quality.

- Avoid excessive use of pesticides, fertilizers and other chemicals on lawns or in gardens, especially near the wellhead. Any chemicals used to control weeds or to fertilize lawns and gardens may potentially leach into your drinking water supply.
- Dispose of hazardous chemicals and wastes properly. Never dispose of these items by dumping into a septic system, ditches, rivers, wooded areas or into abandoned wells or they may end up in your drinking water.
- Maintain onsite septic systems in good operating condition. Inspect and pump the septic system as recommended by the local health department. Failing septic systems could introduce nitrates into groundwater supplies.
- Periodically inspect exposed parts of the well for problems such as a cracked, corroded, or damaged well casing; broken or missing well cap; or settling and cracking of surface seals.
- Make sure a well cap is present or install a sanitary seal to prevent unauthorized use of, or entry into the well.
- Keep your well away from septic tanks, septic fields, animal pens, or other sources of potential contamination.
- Slope the area around the well to keep surface runoff drained away from the well area.

Well Water Testing

It's also important to have well water supplies tested annually for bacteria and nitrates. The local health department or university extension office may be able to provide information about other contaminants of regional concern for which the well water should also be tested.

To view a list of common contaminants that can be found in public and private drinking water supplies, visit www.nsf.org/consumer/drinking_water/dw_contaminant_guide.asp.



Avoid excessive use of pesticides and fertilizers on lawns, as these chemicals can leach into your drinking water supply.