

## What to do if Your Drinking Water is Unsafe to Drink

If your test results show that your water is unsafe to drink, follow these guidelines:

### Drinking water

To make your water safe, do one of these things:

- boil water for 1 minute, OR
- treat water by adding ¼ tsp (1.25 mL) of liquid household bleach to 1 gallon (4.5 litres) of water and leave it for 30 minutes. There should be a faint chlorine smell in the water, OR
- use bottled water bought from a store.

Store boiled or treated water in clean containers in the refrigerator.

### Other water use

#### Handwashing:

- use bottled, boiled or treated water (see above), OR
- wash your hands normally and then use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer (available at your local drug store).

#### Cooking and Food Preparation:

- use bottled, boiled or treated water to wash foods such as vegetables and fruit, and to make juice
- if you are cooking something in boiling water for 5 minutes or more, you don't have to use treated water
- throw out ice cubes made with unsafe water.

#### Bathing | Showering:

- you can still bathe or have a shower as long as you don't swallow the water
- after bathing/showering wash your hands with treated water
- wash kids with a cloth or sponge instead of in a tub – try to use treated water.

#### Brushing Teeth | Dishwashing / Pets:

- use bottled, boiled or treated water.

#### Laundry:

- continue to wash clothes as usual.

#### Livestock:

- consult a veterinarian about whether your livestock should drink the water.

#### Dishwashers

- after finishing the cycle, soak dishes in a bleach solution for 1 minute - 1 oz (30 mL) bleach with 3 gallons (13.5 L) water.

## How to disinfect your well

If your well is contaminated, sometimes a one-time (shock) chlorination of your well will make it safe again.

We do NOT recommend this shock treatment for dug wells (because they are easily contaminated), or if there is a known source of contamination such as a sewage system or manure pile draining toward the well.

If you try shock chlorination and it does not work, you need to think about adding a treatment device or getting a new well. Ask a licensed well driller or plumber for help.

## Remember

- Take off enough water for the 12 hours that you cannot use it! But remember to boil or treat this water!
- Check your owner's manual or the manufacturer's directions before shock chlorination to avoid damage to equipment such as water heaters, softeners, pressure tanks and carbon filters.

## Follow these instructions to shock your well

Add the following amount of liquid household bleach to your well:

- **Drilled Well:** 142 mL (5 oz) of bleach for every 7.5 M (25ft) of water.
- **Dug Well (NOT recommended):** 1 litre (1 quart) of bleach for every 1.5 M (5 ft) of water.
  - Mix the bleach with a few litres of water before pouring it down your well.
  - If possible, run a hose to the well to mix water in the well
  - Run water through all taps until you can smell the bleach. **Do not use the water for 12 hours after.** After 12 hours, run the rest of the treated water through an outside hose away from the septic tank system. Stop running the water when the smell of bleach is gone.
  - Wait at least 2 days before collecting a sample for testing
  - Get 3 good samples in a row to make sure your drinking water is safe. These should be collected 1 to 3 weeks apart. Assume your water is unsafe until you get 3 good results.

## What does the water sample result mean?

Total coliform are bacteria that you find in animal wastes and sewage, and are also found in soil and some plants. Their presence may indicate that surface water is going into your well.

E.coli are bacteria found only in the gut of people and animals. Their presence in your well water is usually the result of animal or human waste getting into your well from nearby.

## Test Result Outcomes

### No evidence of bacterial contamination.

Total coliform per 100 mL	E.coli per 100 mL
0 to 5	0

### Safe to drink!

Three samples taken in a row 1 to 3 weeks apart are needed to see if your water is good.

**Significant evidence of bacterial contamination.**

Total coliform per 100 mL	E.coli per 100 mL
6 to > 80	0

**Unsafe to drink unless boiled or treated.**

Call your local Public Health Unit for information as soon as possible.

**Evidence of sewage contamination.**

Total coliform per 100 mL	E.coli per 100 mL
6 to > 80	1 to >80

**Unsafe to drink.**

Call your local Public Health Unit for information as soon as possible.

**O/G (NDOGT) Evidence of bacterial and/or sewage contamination.**

**Unsafe to drink unless boiled or treated.**

Sample was overgrown with non-coliform bacteria and coliform and/or E.coli were present. Call your local Public Health Unit for information as soon as possible.

**O/G (NDOGN) Evidence of bacterial contamination.**

**May be unsafe to drink.**

Sample was overgrown with non-coliform bacteria making the coliform results unclear. Collect another sample and send it in.

## Well checklist

**If you get an unsafe water result you should check these things on your well:**

- Inspect the well cover and sanitary seal for cracks and holes.
- Check the condition of well vents.
- Watch for settling of the ground around the outside of the well casing.
- If so, mound up the ground around the outside of the well or well pit with clean earth to drain surface water away.
- Keep all potential contamination sources away from the well (e.g. manure piles, sewage systems).
- Maintain a permanent grassed area at least 3 metres (10 ft) around your well.
- If the well is in a pit, ensure there is no visible water in the pit and that the well is properly sealed. Consider extending the well casing above grade and filling in the pit or replacing it with a drilled well.
- Look at the inside of the well:
  - look for signs of surface water seeping into the well and for stains on the side of the casing
  - check the seal around the plumbing inlets into the well casing (dug or bored) or well pit, and replace sealing material if water is seeping in from outside the well
  - remove anything that is floating in the well and prevent more from getting into the well.
- Maintain filters and treatment devices according to manufacturer's directions.

**Note: never enter the well or well pit.**