



www.nhwaterwell.com

Information: New Hampshire Water Well Association

Information in this document is provided in good faith to inform the public about groundwater and water wells. Well owners should ensure that their well contractor has obtained permits (if required) and has referred to local codes, rules, regulations and laws for site selection, construction, maintenance and operation of water wells and water system equipment.

THE ABC'S OF WATER TESTING

If you own a private well you are responsible for having the water tested on a regular basis to ensure that it is safe to drink. YOU CAN'T TELL JUST BY LOOKING, SMELLING OR BY TASTING. An annual bacteria and nitrate test, will cost around \$35. This test should also be done after any repairs are done to a well or after a new well is installed. If you have an infant less than six months old you need the assurance that your well water has less than 10 parts per million of nitrate. If there are nitrates at high levels in water used to mix baby formula for infants, the result could be methemoglobinemia or "blue baby syndrome."

All wells should have at least a one-time test to determine the presence and the level of potentially harmful contaminants such as lead, pesticides, arsenic, fluoride, gasoline or radon. If there is no record of such a test for your home it makes sense to take a sample to your local laboratory. Your water may look good and taste good, but only a test can assure you that it is also doing you good.

FIRST TIME TESTS

If you have never had your water tested, or if you don't have any record of previous tests, the NHWWA recommends that you test for the following

- **Coliform Bacteria**
- **Nitrate/nitrite**
- **pH (acidity)**
- **Chloride**
- **Iron**
- **Manganese**
- **Sulfate**
- **Hardness**
- **Alkalinity**
- **(TDS)**
- **Total dissolved solids**

If the well is near an operational or abandoned gas station or known buried storage tank then also test for **Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs)**. If your well is in bedrock then also test for: **Arsenic, Radon and Fluoride**

A basic test of water chemistry that determines mineral content of your well water is very important if you intend to install any water conditioning equipment. The basic test would include pH (acidity), iron and manganese, hardness, chloride, sodium and total dissolved solids (TDS). These inexpensive tests are usually available as a "package deal" from certified laboratories and the results are important for assessing water quality problems you may have such as color, taste or odor, water hardness, or staining of clothes and fixtures. These are all problems associated with the mineral content of your water and most can be effectively treated with home treatment devices.

HOW TO GET YOUR WATER TESTED

Option 1 Some laboratories offer a delivery and collection service. You place an order via phone or e-mail. Sample bottles and packing box are sent to you with sampling instructions. You take the sample, send it off via mail or courier service and the results are e-mailed, faxed or mailed to you.

Option 2 Use a local certified laboratory. You may stop-by the lab to pick up sampling directions and sample containers. Collect your samples and deliver them back to the lab.

Option 3 Engage a certified laboratory to come to your home and take the water samples.

Option 4 Check with your local water well company to see if they offer a sampling service that uses a certified laboratory to do water testing.

Visit the NH Department of Environmental Services Laboratory Testing Unit web-site where there is a list of the approximately 20 accredited water testing laboratories in the state. It is important that you follow the instructions from whichever laboratory you use because incorrect sampling procedures can lead to inaccurate or meaningless test results.

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