

# A homeowner's guide to private well water

## TEST THE WATER

Contaminants may be colorless, odorless or tasteless. Testing the water is the only way to know if it is safe. Contact SHL for guidance.

- Test **Annually** for Total coliform bacteria plus *E.coli* and nitrate
- Test **Every 5 Years** for Arsenic
- Test if changes occur in the taste, odor or color of water
- Test if there have been nearby contamination sources (flooding, leaking septic tank, agriculture, etc.)
- Test if experiencing illness associated with water, such as diarrhea

## MAINTAIN THE WELL

Have a certified well professional:

- Inspect the well annually
- Conduct routine maintenance
- Make needed repairs

## PREVENT CONTAMINATION

- Keep chemicals and fuels far away from the well
- Maintain the septic system (if applicable)
- Place secondary containers around chemicals to catch leaks
- Do not connect hoses directly from faucet into chemical containers

## VISUALLY INSPECT THE WELL

Check the wellhead several times a year for:

- structural damage
- tightly sealed well cap

If the well is in a pit, contact a professional for an inspection.

## RESPOND TO CONTAMINATION

If unsafe contaminants have been found:

- Do Not drink the water
- Contact your county health department for evaluation and guidance
- Next steps may include additional sampling, disinfection and/or treatment
  - Retest to make sure water is safe



**Ongoing  
protection  
of your  
water**

## Important Contacts

State Hygienic Lab (SHL) **800-421-IOWA** County Health Department \_\_\_\_\_

Well Contractor \_\_\_\_\_ Treatment Systems \_\_\_\_\_

Unlike municipal water systems, well water is not monitored or regulated by local, state or federal agencies. It is the responsibility of homeowners with private wells to maintain and monitor the well and water quality. Some water tests may be available for free. Contact the State Hygienic Laboratory or your county health department for details.

**SHL.UIOWA.EDU**

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