

Well Water Safety Checklist

Keep your family's drinking water safe · Free printable guide

Private wells are **not** covered by the federal Safe Drinking Water Act the way city water is—you are in charge of testing. Use this checklist yearly and whenever something changes. Find a state-certified lab at findawelllab.com.

Your annual safety checklist

- **1. Schedule your yearly lab test** — CDC/EPA: test yearly for coliform bacteria, nitrates, TDS, and pH at a state-certified lab.
- **2. Know your local risks** — Ask your health dept about arsenic, lead, radon, pesticides, PFAS, manganese; retest every 3–5 years.
- **3. Watch for taste, smell, or color changes** — Cloudy water, metallic/rotten-egg smell, rusty stains, or salty taste → test right away.
- **4. Retest after floods or heavy storms** — If floodwater reached the well, test bacteria (and nitrates near farms/septic) before drinking.
- **5. Retest after well or pump work** — Repairs, pump swaps, new tanks, or deepening can introduce bacteria—disinfect, then retest.
- **6. Test before a new baby or pregnancy** — Infants/pregnant people are more sensitive to nitrates (“blue baby syndrome”) and other contaminants.
- **7. Check farms, septic systems, and neighbors** — Nearby farms, manure, septic, dumps, gas stations, or dry cleaners raise contaminant risk.
- **8. Inspect the wellhead and cap** — Secure sanitary cap; no standing water or chemicals nearby; fix cracks or missing seals.
- **9. Note the well's age and construction** — Older/shallow dug wells are more vulnerable. Keep your well log (depth, yield, construction).
- **10. Don't ignore stomach bugs in the house** — Repeated GI illness → test for coliform/E. coli. Home strips aren't a certified-lab substitute.
- **11. Think about plumbing and lead** — Older pumps, brass, or lead solder: first-draw lead test after water sat overnight.
- **12. Keep a simple water diary** — Record test dates, labs, results, treatment, and taste notes for labs, drillers, or doctors.
- **13. Have a backup drinking plan** — Keep sealed bottled water for infant formula and short outages after a bad test or flood.
- **14. Share results with caregivers** — If kids, elders, or guests drink from your well, share the latest test date and filter schedule.
- **15. Retest after treatment is installed** — Confirm a softener, sediment filter, or UV system is working with a follow-up lab test.

■ Quick “test now” red flags

Floodwater over/near the well · Sudden change in taste, odor, or color · New baby, pregnancy, or nursing · Nearby farm spill, septic backup, or fuel smell · Well, pump, or plumbing repair just completed

Next step: Find a state-certified lab → <https://findawelllab.com> · Family guides → <https://findawelllab.com/guides/>

Sources (guidance only): CDC Guidelines for Testing Well Water (2024) · U.S. EPA Protect Your Home's Water / Private Wells · EPA Private Wells & Infants · USGS groundwater summaries

Not medical or legal advice. If someone is sick, contact a doctor. For contaminated-water emergencies, contact your local health department. Interpret lab results with a certified lab or public-health professional.

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