

## Tips to Protect Your Water

- Test your well water at least once a year for bacteria and for other contaminants every 3-5 years.
- Test your water for *E. coli* and coliform bacteria after you disinfect and flush your well, or perform maintenance on your system to make sure problems are addressed.
- Regularly check and maintain the well, system components and area surrounding the well.
- Test your water if you notice changes in how your water looks, smells or tastes, after floods, changes in land use, or concerns about local contaminants.
- If you suspect your well could be contaminated by gasoline, heating oil or chemicals, contact your health department and the DEC Spill Hotline at (800) 457-7362.
- Keep records of maintenance activities and water testing.
- Contact your health department for advice on maintaining, testing, disinfecting and flushing your well.
- Take steps to get connected to a public water system, if you have the opportunity. Public water is the best option for household water because it is regularly monitored and managed by a certified water operator.

### Find your area health department:

[www.health.ny.gov/EnvironmentalContacts](http://www.health.ny.gov/EnvironmentalContacts)

[www.health.ny.gov/PrivateWells](http://www.health.ny.gov/PrivateWells)  
(518) 402-7650

[bpwsp@health.ny.gov](mailto:bpwsp@health.ny.gov)



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# Test Your Well Protect Your Family's Water

## Tips for People on Private Wells



Take steps to make sure the water from your private well is suitable for drinking, preparing food, and all household uses.

Germs and chemicals can enter your drinking water from runoff and natural changes in the water that serves your well.

The use of contaminated water for drinking, preparing food and making ice can make you, your family and your pets sick. Babies, children, pregnant women, older adults and people with health conditions are most at risk of health effects from consuming contaminated water.

## Regularly Test Your Water

Testing your drinking water is the only way to make sure that your water remains suitable for household uses. Test your water at the tap at least once a year for bacteria and every 3-5 years for the other contaminants listed to the right. The best time to test your water is in the late spring or early summer.

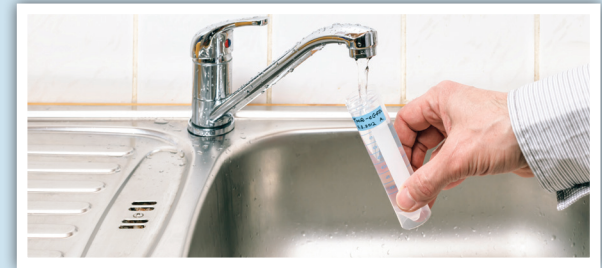
Your lab will provide instructions and bottles. Find a certified lab at <https://apps.health.ny.gov/pubdoh/applinks/wc/elappublicweb/>.

### Also Consider Testing If ...

- You notice changes in how your water looks, smells or tastes.
- There are changes in your household/family, such as pregnancy, new babies, or changes in someone's overall health.
- You or your health care provider suspect your drinking water could be causing symptoms such as diarrhea or vomiting.
- You have made repairs to your well, pipes or home structure, or have changed your drinking water system.
- You notice changes in land use, such as construction or farming, that could cause runoff to enter your well.
- You have concerns about local contaminants, such as radon or those from nearby industrial or waste sites.
- Your well was recently flooded or damaged by extreme weather.
- The well runs dry or the amount of water flowing from your fixtures changes.

Contact your area health department for advice. Look up your health department by county at

[www.health.ny.gov/EnvironmentalContacts](http://www.health.ny.gov/EnvironmentalContacts).



### Test Your Well EACH YEAR for

***E. coli* & coliform bacteria**- indicate fecal contamination that can cause symptoms such as diarrhea and vomiting

### Test Your Well EVERY 3-5 YEARS for

**Lead**- harmful to many organs and systems in the body and most harmful to developing babies and young children

**Nitrate & Nitrite**- most harmful to babies; associated with infant blood problems

**Arsenic**- long-term exposure is associated with nerve and liver damage, cancer, high blood pressure, and damage to blood vessels of the heart and brain

**Sodium**- concern for individuals on restricted sodium diets due to high blood pressure or other medical issues

**Iron & Manganese**- cause rust or black staining of fixtures or clothes

**Turbidity (cloudy water)**- interferes with chlorine and UV-light disinfection

**pH**- causes lead and copper pipe corrosion and metallic-bitter taste

**Hardness**- causes mineral and soap deposits on fixtures; reduces detergent efficiency

**Alkalinity**- interferes with chlorine disinfection and causes metallic-bitter taste

### Your water could come from a private well if...

- You do not receive a water bill.
- You live in a rural area.
- You have a septic system.
- You have a water pump in your home for your drinking water system.

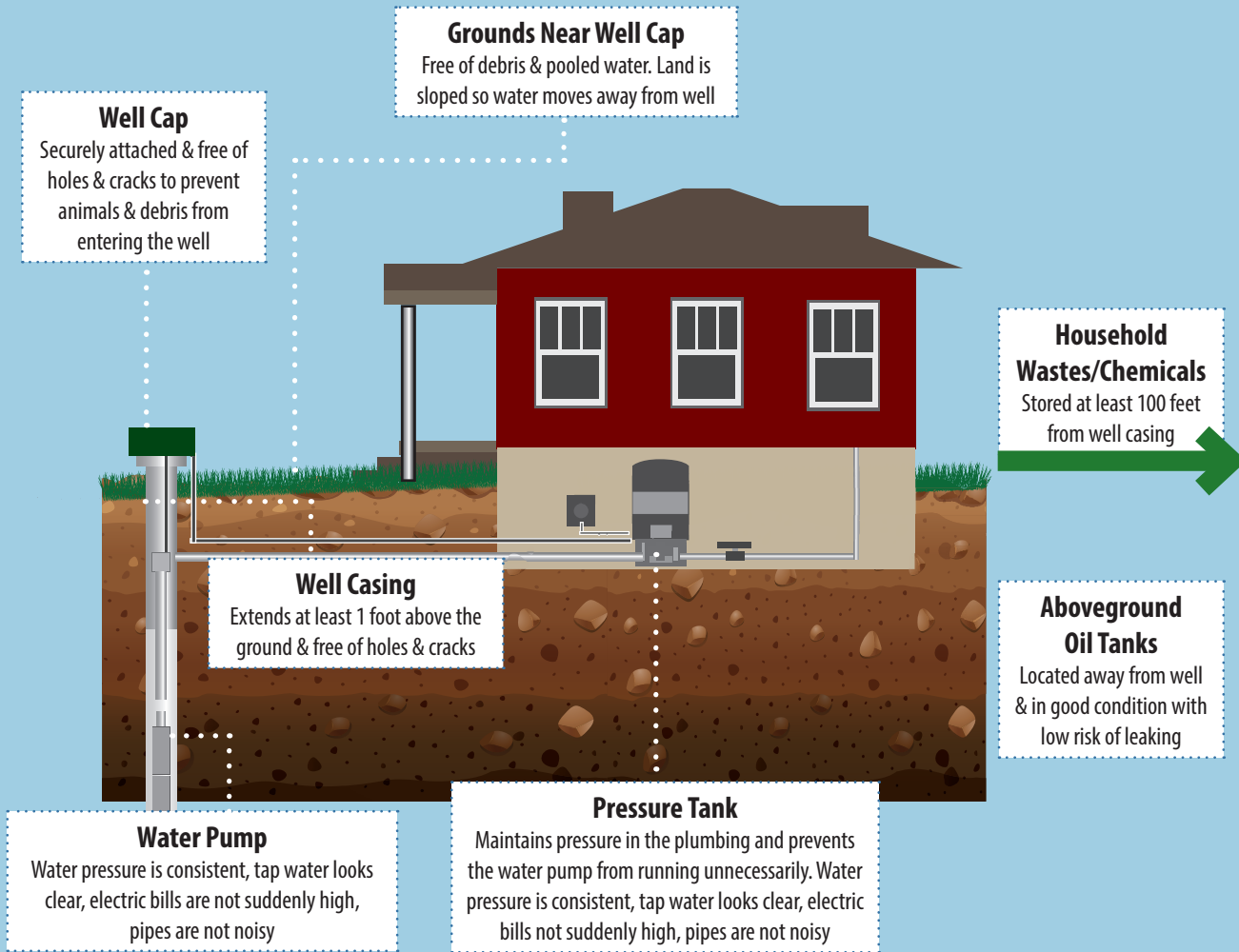
Questions? Contact Your Area Health Department  
[www.health.ny.gov/EnvironmentalContacts](http://www.health.ny.gov/EnvironmentalContacts)



# Inspect & Maintain Your Well and Water System

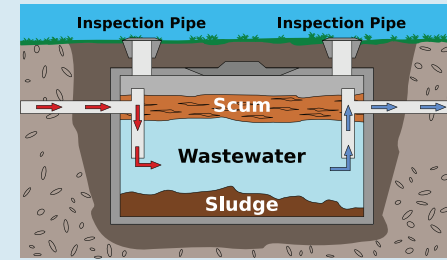
Have a well contractor inspect your well at least once a year to stay ahead of maintenance issues. Regular inspections help prevent contaminants from getting into your tap water from a poorly maintained well. The NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) has a list of registered well contractors at <https://www.dec.ny.gov/cfm/xtapps/WaterWell/index.cfm>.

Use this diagram to keep an eye out for problems. If you suspect issues and need help, contact a professional. Stop using your tap water for drinking, preparing food and making ice, and switch to bottled water until your water is tested and the problem is addressed.



This diagram shows a drilled well. If you have a dug well, your well cap and casing may look different. Learn more about **Standards for Water Wells** at [www.health.ny.gov/regulations/nycrr/title\\_10/part\\_5/appendix\\_5b.htm](http://www.health.ny.gov/regulations/nycrr/title_10/part_5/appendix_5b.htm).

## Inspect & Pump Out Your Septic System



Have a DEC-permitted waste transporter inspect and pump out your septic system every 2-3 years to avoid potential well contamination from a failing septic system. Learn more at **Septic System Operation and Maintenance** [www.health.ny.gov/publications/3208/](http://www.health.ny.gov/publications/3208/).

## Maintain Water Treatment Equipment



If you have water treatment systems, follow manufacturer recommendations for maintenance and testing and work with a water treatment professional to develop a plan to evaluate and maintain you system. Systems that are not regularly maintained can result in failure of water treatment and loss of water pressure.

## Avoid Electric Shock Risk



- Before making any repairs:
- Shut off power to the pump and water system.
  - Examine for broken wire insulation or missing wire nuts and repair as necessary.
  - Wear waterproof, rubber soled shoes or boots.

## Contaminants in Your Water?

Stop using your water and use bottled water for drinking, preparing food or making ice if water tests show contaminants in your well water or if you suspect your well could be contaminated.

Follow these steps from **Restoring and Testing Your Private Well**

[www.health.ny.gov/privatewells](http://www.health.ny.gov/privatewells)

- Check the well and area around the well for damage.
- Repair and flush your well.
- Disinfect your well water to address biological contamination.
- Test your water to assure suitable quality for all household uses.
- Contact your area health department for help if you need it. Look them up at [www.health.ny.gov/EnvironmentalContacts](http://www.health.ny.gov/EnvironmentalContacts).

If you suspect your well could be contaminated by gasoline, heating oil or chemicals, stop using your water and immediately contact your area health department and the DEC Spill Hotline at (800) 457-7362.

Resume using your water after contamination is addressed and water tests confirm your water is suitable for household uses.

