



[Residents](#) > » [Water and environment](#) > » [Drinking water and wells](#) > » [Wells](#)
> » [Free well water testing](#) > » [What to do if your well water is contaminated](#)

What to do if your well water is contaminated

How to sterilize your drinking water

If your drinking water results show that your well water is contaminated and unsafe to drink, follow these guidelines until your water supply is safe again.

Use only **one** of the following options for a safe supply of drinking water:

- Bring water to a rolling boil and then boil it for at least one full minute. A full rolling boil is a vigorous boil that can not be stopped by stirring the water). **OR**
- Mix 1/4 tsp. (1.25 mL) of liquid household bleach, such as Javex, to one gallon (4.5L) of water and let stand for 30 minutes. There should be a faint chlorine smell to the water. **OR**
- Use commercially bottled water.

Refrigerate boiled or treated water in clean containers.

What water to use for washing and to use for pets

Handwashing: Use bottled, boiled or treated water (as above) or use the usual supply for handwashing, then follow with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

Food Preparation: Use bottled, boiled or treated water to make juice or formula or to wash ready-to-eat foods such as fruits and vegetables. If the food will be boiled for longer than five minutes during the cooking process, it is not necessary to use treated water. Do not use ice cubes made with the unsafe water.

Bathing/showering: Adults may continue to use the usual supply, as long as no water is swallowed. After you bathe or shower, use treated water to wash your hands. Give sponge baths to children, using treated water.

Brushing teeth: Use boiled, bottled or treated water.

Laundry: Use your usual source of water.

Dishwashing: Use bottled, boiled or treated water.

Pets: Use bottled, boiled or treated water.

Livestock: Consult a veterinarian regarding water for livestock.

Garden: It is recommended that a vegetable garden or a fruit orchard be watered using treated or boiled water.

How to disinfect a well

You can easily disinfect your well contaminated with bacteria by "shock-treating" it with ordinary chlorinated household bleach containing 5.25 per cent sodium hypochlorite. Don't use scented bleach for this purpose. Buy fresh bleach to do this because the chlorine in bleach is unstable and evaporates over time. (Bleach loses half its strength in six months.)

Dug Wells (three feet (1 m) in diameter): Add one quart (one litre) of household bleach for every five feet (1.5 m) of water depth.

Drilled Wells (six inches (15 cm) in diameter): Add five ounces (142 mL) of household bleach for every 25 ft (7.5 m) of water depth.

Well Points (two inches (5 cm) in diameter): Add about one quarter ounce (6 ml) of household bleach for every 10 ft (3 m) of water depth.

Do not drink the water until you receive satisfactory water quality test results.

1. Refer to your well record to find out how deep your well is. If you don't know how deep the water is in the well, use the well depth to estimate how much bleach to add.
2. Remove or bypass any carbon filters in the system. (These filters will remove chlorine from the water, thus preventing the pipes beyond the filter from being disinfected.)
3. Pour the required amount of household bleach into the well air vent or by removing the well cover.
4. If possible, agitate or mix the well water by using a clean hose to pump the chlorinated water back into the well, flushing down the well casing and water lines above the water level.
5. Disconnect the pump filter, run water through all taps for 20 minutes until a strong chlorine smell is detected. (If there is no chlorine smell, repeat the chlorine treatment.)
6. Drain the water heater and fill with chlorinated water. Backflush the water softener and all filters except carbon filters. Then wait 12 hours.
7. Run the rest of the treated water through an outside hose away from the septic tank system (excess chlorine will kill the bacteria necessary for breaking down wastes) and away from surface water courses i.e. rivers and ditches.
8. Stop running the hose when the smell of chlorine is gone. Run clear water through the faucets.
9. Do not drink the water until test results prove it is safe to drink.
10. Retest 48 hours after chlorination is complete. Two bacteria-clear tests over one to three weeks is a strong indicator that the water is safe to drink.
11. If any test shows contamination, repeat the disinfection process from the beginning.

If shock chlorination doesn't correct the problem, you will need professional help to determine whether a new well (such as a drilled well instead of a dug well) is required, or whether an on-site water disinfection system will deliver the desired results.

Bleach required to disinfect a well

1) Drilled wells

Well Depth	Bleach Volume

feet	meters	fluid oz.	ml
25	7	5	150
50	14	10	300
75	21	15	450
100	28	20	600
125	35	25	750
150	42	30	900
175	49	35	1050
200	56	40	1200

2) Dug wells

Well Depth		Bleach Volume
feet	meters	liters
5	1.5	1
10	3	2
15	4.5	3
20	6	4
25	7.5	5

30	9	6
----	---	---

Visit the [City-owned Wells](#) if you would like to know how we purify communal wells.
