



**Safe well water?
Not a sure thing.**

Test to be sure.



Had my water gone bad?

“Family members have lived on our land for generations. Never had a problem with the well water as far as I know. But times have changed. The water could have gone bad. So, I got it tested to find out. Hated to spend the money, but it gave me peace of mind.”

We're protecting our family.

“We're new to having a well and didn't know if the water was safe to drink. So, we drank bottled water. But, it made more sense and cost less to get the water tested. Now we know the water is safe. This protects our health and property value.”



Make sure your well water is safe. Learn how.



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» Make sure your well water is safe to drink. Test.

Our water looks, smells, and tastes fine. Why test it?

Here's why:

- Germs, chemicals, and toxic waste **on** or **in** the ground can pollute your water **under** the ground. You might not see, smell, or taste them.
- Some local rocks contain harmful substances that can dissolve into your well water.

Possible results:

- Symptoms such as an upset stomach or diarrhea
- Plumbing problems
- Increased chance of serious health problems, including cancer, from certain chemicals

» What should we test and how often?

If you have never tested your well water, test for everything listed on **the schedule on page 4**. After this first complete test, you can follow a schedule that spreads out the tests and the costs. You may need other tests depending on your well type or where you live.

Other times to test: Whenever you notice a change in the color, taste, or smell of your water.

Use a **certified water testing lab**. See page 5 for a list of certified labs.

Water experts at the Rhode Island Department of Health and the University of Rhode Island with answers for you



Alyson McCann
UNIVERSITY OF RI



Patrick Craft
RI DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH



Richard Amirault
RI DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

» Here are the steps to test your well water:

1. Choose a **certified** testing lab from the list on page 5.
2. Call and tell them which water tests you think you need. If you have never tested, consider testing for everything listed on **the schedule on page 4**.
3. The lab will supply you with bottles and directions to collect water samples. If you're not sure what to do, call the lab or us for more help. Some labs will do the sampling for you, right at your home.
4. After you collect your water samples, get them back to the lab within 24 hours.
5. Watch for results in the mail within 2 weeks. Your lab results will point out anything over the safe limit.

» If I have a problem, how will I get it fixed?

Some water quality problems are fairly quick and easy to fix. Others take longer and cost more. Call us to better understand your test results or learn how to fix a well water problem.



Contact us with questions or concerns:

Rhode Island Department of Health (401) 222-5960

University of Rhode Island Water Quality Program (401) 874-5398

Alyson McCann: alyson@uri.edu

Patrick Craft: patrick.craft@health.ri.gov

Richard Amirault: richard.amirault@health.ri.gov

Well Testing Schedule

If you have never tested your well water, test for **everything** listed below. After this first complete test, you can follow the schedule below that spreads out the tests and the costs.

» Every year

| Test for: | Why? |
|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Coliform bacteria (germs) | Key water quality test |
| Nitrate | Infant blood problems |
| Nitrite | Infant blood problems |
| Color | Key water quality test |
| Turbidity (cloudy water) | Key water quality test |
| Chloride | Salty tasting water |

» Every 3–5 years

| Test for: | Why? |
|---|--|
| Fluoride | Too much fluoride: bone disease, stained teeth Too little fluoride: tooth decay |
| Iron | Laundry or plumbing fixture stains |
| Lead | Physical and mental development delays, kidney problems, high blood pressure |
| Manganese | Laundry or plumbing fixture stains |
| Sulfate | Diarrhea |
| pH | Can ruin appliances and plumbing |
| Tests for corrosiveness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alkalinity • Total Dissolved Solids • Hardness • Specific Conductance | Can ruin appliances and plumbing |

» Every 5–10 years

| Test for: | Why? |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs) | Increased chance of cancer and other health effects |
| MTBE | Gasoline pollution |

» Certified Water Testing Labs

BAL and ESS Labs

(401) 785-0241

185 Frances Avenue

Cranston, RI 02910

www.ballaboratory.com

Northeast Environmental Testing Lab

(401) 454-3400

472 Smith Street

Providence, RI 02908

www.nectl.com

New England

Testing Lab, Inc

(401) 353-3420

1254 Douglas Avenue

North Providence, RI 02904

www.newenglandtesting.com

RI Analytical Labs

(401) 737-8500

41 Illinois Avenue

Warwick, RI 02888

www.rianalytical.com

Premier Lab

(800) 334-0103

61 Louisa Viens Drive

Dayville, CT 06241

www.premierlaboratory.com

Water test kit



TIP: Lab websites give details about standard water testing packages and costs. You can also call the labs for this information. The yearly tests cost about \$90.

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» Neighbors learn together

Patti: Our well water test results just came in the mail. Remember we were worried about how the water was tasting? If I'm reading these results right, it's safe to drink.

Serena: When I got pregnant, I wanted to be careful about everything I ate or drank. That's when we got our well water tested. The lab report was a little confusing, so I called State water experts. They went over the report with me and gave me other good advice.



» Advice from the experts



Keep the area around your well clean.

You don't want dog mess, fertilizer, or gasoline from your mower anywhere near it. Clean ground on the surface helps protect the water below it.

» RICHARD AMIRAULT, RI DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH



Test your water. Use the Testing Schedule

on page 4. It's the only way to be sure the water is safe for your family to drink. It costs money, but less than drinking bottled water.

» PATRICK CRAFT, RI DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH



Come learn more from us about well water and testing at a free workshop. We hold them often. We'll answer your personal questions too. Check our website or your local shoppers guide for dates.

» ALYSON MCCANN, UNIVERSITY OF RI

» Action List

Check off the steps you'll take to make sure your well water is safe:

- Every year, test for germs (bacteria), nitrates, nitrites and more.
- Follow the Well Testing Schedule on page 4.
- Have your water tested if you notice a change in its color, taste, or smell.
- Make sure the area around your well is clean and free of animal waste and other pollution.

TIP: Avoid home water test kits. The results are considered invalid. Use a certified lab listed on page 5.



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Rhode Island Department of Health well water website:

www.health.ri.gov/environment/dwq/privatewell.php



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