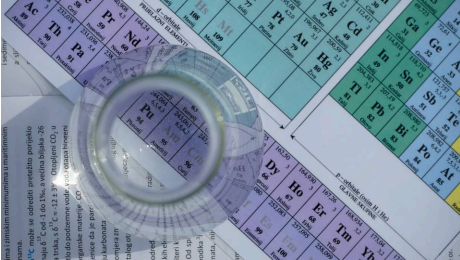


Does My Drinking Water Need Testing?



If you are on a public drinking system, The Clean Water Act requires your water provider to test your water every year. The results of the testing are disclosed in an annual Consumer Confidence Report, making individual testing unnecessary in most cases. If you get your water from a private well, you are responsible for ensuring the quality of your water. Private well water quality can be achieved through annual testing. Owners should test their well water more often if a source of potential well contamination has been identified, their well was built before current construction codes, or if there is an outhouse within 100 feet of their well [4].

What Should I Test For?

Well owners should test annually for nitrates and coliform bacteria [2]. The results from these tests may indicate surface water is entering your well and further testing is required. The presence of nitrates can indicate contamination from fertilizer or landfills while coliform bacteria can indicate contamination from a septic system or livestock yard, which include other contaminants. Additionally, if you have experienced specific symptoms of illness, have old piping, water heater issues, or have noticed declining water quality in your home, more comprehensive testing may be helpful. The table below provides more specific guidelines [3].

Conditions or Nearby Activities:	Test For:
Recurring gastro-intestinal illness	Coliform Bacteria
Household plumbing contains lead	pH, lead, copper

Conditions or Nearby Activities:	Test For:
Radon in indoor air or region is radon rich	Radon
Corrosion of pipes or plumbing	Corrosion, pH, lead
Nearby intensive agriculture	Nitrate, pesticides, coliform bacteria
Nearby mining operations	Metals, pH, corrosion
Nearby gas drilling operations	Chloride, sodium, barium, strontium
Nearby landfill, factory, gas station, or dry-cleaning operation	Volatile organic compounds (VOCs), total dissolved solids (TDS), pH, sulfate, chloride, metals
Odor of gasoline or fuel oil	Volatile organic compounds (VOCs)
Objectionable taste or smell	Hydrogen sulfide, corrosion, metals
Stained plumbing fixtures or laundry	Iron, copper, manganese
Salty taste with nearby salted roadway or seawater	Chloride, total dissolved solids (TDS), sodium
Scaly residues	Hardness
Rapid wear of water treatment equipment	pH, corrosion
Needed water softener	Manganese, iron
Cloudy, frothy, or colored water	Detergents

How Should I Test my Drinking Water?

There are two main options for testing your water- using an at-home kit or collecting a sample and sending it for testing at a professional lab. While at-home kits are inexpensive and can be purchased at any hardware store, their results are subjective and don't give you an in-depth view of the contaminants in your water. Professional lab testing can be completed by contacting a local lab and

following their directions for collection, or by ordering a send-away kit from a reputed company.

How Do I Collect a Sample?

Interpreting Results

When you receive your results, compare them with the [EPA's National Primary Drinking Water Regulations](#). These regulations have been developed for public drinking water systems in order to protect public health. If your water contains contaminants in excess of the established maximum contaminant level, do not drink the water! Learn about the risks of specific contaminants and research treatment options. Use the [testing interpretation tool](#) to understand more about what your results mean.

References

- [1] Davis County Health Department. Environmental Health Department. www.daviscountyutah.gov/health/environmental-health-division/services/environmental-health-laboratory-new
- [2] Massie, L., & Messner, N. (2012). How to protect your well water. Utah State University Extension.
- [3] Scherer, T., & Johnson, R. (2022, February). What's wrong with my water? Choosing the right test. North Dakota State University Extension. www.ag.ndsu.edu
- [4] Utah Admin. Code R317-560-2

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Containers provided by the lab often contain sodium thiosulfate, which preserves bacteria for coliform testing. Do not rinse these containers out [1]. Samples should be kept cool, but not frozen, generally between 34-50° F [1]. Properties of the water continue to change while stored in a container. Labs will reject samples after a specified amount of time as water samples cannot be analyzed if delivered after a certain amount of time. For example, the Davis County Health Department rejects samples delivered more than 30 hours after collection [1].