

Tips on Protecting Your Private Drinking Water Well



Private wells are vulnerable to contamination because they tend to be shallow and close to residential or commercial development. Unregulated contaminants, including pharmaceuticals, chemicals in consumer products, and industrial compounds can make their way into private wells from polluted groundwater. Because private wells are not federally regulated, contaminated water often goes unnoticed. If you own a private well, there are steps you can take to keep your drinking water safe for you and your family.



- ✓ **Get it tested** The Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) recommends annual testing for nitrates and bacteria. Also consider testing your water for arsenic, volatile organic compounds, and pesticides.
 - ✓ **Install a filter** Because nitrate is a marker for other contaminants from wastewater, if nitrate levels exceed 1 ppm, consider installing a solid carbon block filter to remove other contaminants that may be present. If nitrate levels exceed 10 ppm (EPA's drinking water standard), treat your water with a reverse osmosis or ion exchange system.
 - ✓ **Create a buffer** Never dump hazardous materials like pesticides, paint, fertilizers, or oil in your yard.
 - ✓ **Don't flush it** Never pour medications down the drain or flush them down the toilet.
 - ✓ **Know the source** Find out where your drinking water comes from and what factors might affect the quality of water in your well (e.g. farming, landfills, development).
- ✓ **Choose less toxic products** Avoid consumer products with harmful chemicals. This will reduce the amount of pollutants entering your household wastewater. Consult Detox Me, Silent Spring's free mobile app for tips on choosing safer products (www.silentspring.org/detoxme).
 - ✓ **Learn more** MassDEP offers guidance for private well owners. Visit: www.mass.gov/private-wells

