



How Can I Tell If the Water in My House is Safe to Drink?

Sometimes you can rely on your senses to alert you to a few of the more unappetizing things — like sulfur, with its distinctive rotten-egg smell, or too much chlorine. However, some of the most serious — and most common — contaminants, like bacteria, viruses, lead, and other chemicals, can't be tasted or smelled. Regardless of where you get your drinking water, from the city or from a well, there's only one way to know for sure what's in it, and that's to have it tested.

How can I test my tap water?

EPA states that more than 90 percent of municipal water systems in this country meet its water quality standards, however, some contaminants can still make their way into the water supply including arsenic, viruses and other disease-causing organisms, chlorine by-products, industrial and agricultural pollutants, and lead.

For a copy of the annual water quality reports for many municipal water system, visit your local water supplier's website or the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) website. You can also call your water supplier (the number's on your water bill) for a copy of the report or to request testing of the water from your own faucets. This type of test will determine if any contaminants are getting into the water between the treatment plant and your drinking glass. Some suppliers will do this test free of charge.

Have your water tested for lead if you have lead pipes or brass faucets (which may contain lead), and for copper if you have copper pipes. Lead solder could legally be used to join plumbing pipes until 1986, but lead is a concern even if you live in a brand-new home. Faucets and pipes are still allowed to contain as much as 8 percent lead and have been shown to leach the metal in significant amounts, particularly when they're new.

What about testing well water?

Federal drinking water standards don't apply to private wells, so it's up to you to have your well water tested (and to pay for the test). Well water should be tested for nitrates, coliform bacteria (bacteria found in the intestines), total dissolved solids, and pH (acidity or alkalinity), especially if your well is new or you've recently replaced or repaired pipes. Test every three years for chloride, iron, sulfate, manganese, hardness, and corrosion.

The Medina County Health Department offers well testing before buying or selling a home (as part of a real estate inspection), when a new well is installed, or any time upon request. For more information about safe well water or well inspections, contact us at 330-723-9688, option 3.

The Medina County Health Department has protected your health since 1918 and is a trusted source of health guidance for creating a healthy environment, healthy people, and a healthy community. Services are partially supported by your property tax health levy. Equal opportunity provider.

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