

WELL WATER TESTING PROGRAM

TILLAMOOK COUNTY COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTERS



COMMON CONTAMINANTS

Two of the most commonly tested-for well water contaminants are total coliform bacteria (including *E. coli*) and nitrates. Common sources, health effects, and the most at-risk populations for those health effects are listed below.

NITRATES

Sources: Nitrate can occur naturally in groundwater, but high levels are often associated with human activities, such as runoff from animal manure, human sewage waste and commercial fertilizers

Health Effects: Nitrates affect how the blood carries oxygen, which is especially dangerous for infants. Nitrate consumption can also lead to birth defects, thyroid disease, and certain types of cancer.

High-Risk Populations: Infants & Children under 3, pregnant women

TOTAL COLIFORM BACTERIA

Sources: Coliform bacteria enter wells through groundwater, surface water run-off, cracked or broken well parts, poor construction, and leaking septic tanks, and is often a sign of fecal matter present in water

Health Effects: Certain types of disease-causing coliform bacteria can lead to diarrhea, cramps, nausea, headaches, or other symptoms

High-Risk Populations: Infants, young children, people with compromised immune systems

WELL WATER

Clean, safe, accessible drinking water is incredibly important for your health. Unlike public water systems, there is no regulation requiring water from private wells to meet certain standards for safety. As a private well owner, you are responsible for testing and maintaining your own safe water supply.

Private wells pump groundwater (water in the rock and soil deep underground) up to the surface to use in your home. Generally, groundwater is safe to drink, but different types of rock and soil or sources of contamination like nearby agriculture or a failing septic system can cause unwanted chemicals and bacteria, known as contaminants, to get into your well and your water. These contaminants usually don't have a taste, smell, or color, but they can make you sick. The quality of your water may also change over time, so it's important to test your well water regularly to keep yourself and others living in your home safe.

The United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recommends testing your well **every year** for:

- Nitrates
- Total Coliform Bacteria
- Total dissolved solids
- pH

You should test your well **immediately** after any of the following:

- You learn about water quality concerns nearby
- Flooding, land disturbances, or new construction or industrial activity
- You replace or repair any part of your well
- You notice a change in the taste, smell, or color of your water

You should also inspect your well at least **every year**. The resources on the back can help you identify what to look for when inspecting your well.

ADDITIONAL WELL RESOURCES

- **OHA Domestic Well Safety Program (DWSP)**: Information on well testing, accredited laboratories, and contaminant health effects
- **OSU Extension Well Water Program**: Education on contaminants and how to maintain your well
- **The Private Well Class**: A free, online class designed to help well owners better understand how their well works (privatewellclass.org)
- **U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)**: Information on water contaminants, maximum safe levels, and how to protect your well and groundwater supply
- **U.S. Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC)**: Information on well water contaminants, maintenance, and what to do with your well during flooding and other emergencies



Visit our website for these links, sources, and more:
tillamookchc.org/wells



TILLAMOOK COUNTY WELL TESTING PROGRAM

Tillamook County Community Health Centers (TCCHC) is offering FREE total coliform bacteria and nitrate testing to private well users in Tillamook County. Anyone who gets their water from a private well is eligible.

To participate, you just need to:

- Sign up using our online form
- Pick up the sample bottles from Tillamook County Public Health in Tillamook
- Collect the samples as directed from your wellhead*
- Return the samples to Tillamook County Public Health*
- Agree to have your test results shared with TCCHC, so that we can better understand rates of well contamination in Tillamook County

*Samples must be collected no more than 24 hours prior to being returned to the lab for testing. We will provide more information about when samples can be collected and dropped off when you sign up.

To sign up, you can visit our website at tillamookchc.org/wells or scan the QR code on the left.

Please note: TCCHC is not providing water treatment, bottled water services, well or septic system repair, or specific advice based on the results of water testing. These tests are being provided for educational purposes only. Information collected as part of this program and results from the well water tests cannot be guaranteed to be confidential. If you choose to participate in this program, you assume responsibility for any and all risks associated with your participation.

QUESTIONS?

Contact Tillamook County Community Health Centers

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