Your Well and Your Family

February 2025

Do you get your drinking water from a well? Well water can contain harmful substances at levels that could cause health effects and make you and your family sick. Young children and babies are more sensitive to harmful substances, or contaminants, in drinking water. Some drinking water contaminants can pass from pregnant people to their baby. Here's what you need to do to get your water tested and keep your family safe and healthy.

If you need help accessing or understanding this information, contact AHS.VDHEnvHealth@vermont.gov.

What parents should do

To make sure your water is safe to drink, the Health Department recommends testing your well water on a regular schedule:

- **Bacteria** (Kit A) – every year
- **Inorganic chemicals** (Kit C) – every five years
- **Gross alpha radiation** (Kit RA) – every five years

How to safeguard your drinking water

Clean, safe drinking water protects your family's health. We encourage our children to eat healthy and bundle up in the cold. Why not make sure your well water is safe by testing it for contaminants? The cost of testing is small – $159 – to give you peace of mind. Watch our video on how to test your water at HealthVermont.gov/water.

Where to get your water tested

Use a certified drinking water lab. You can order test kits from the Health Department Laboratory at 800-660-9997 or 802-338-4724 or use another certified drinking water lab. Find a list of certified labs at www.HealthVermont.gov/lab/drinking-water#altlab.

What to do after you test

The water test results will tell you if your water is safe to drink for everyone in your family, especially young children and babies.
If you have questions about your results, you can contact the Health Department's Private Drinking Water Program. **We are water quality experts who can give you accurate information for free.** Call 800-439-8550 or email AHS.VDHEnvHealth@vermont.gov.

HealthVermont.gov/water
802-863-7220

VERMONT
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Contaminants of Special Concern to Babies, Children and Pregnant People

mg/L = milligrams per liter, µg/L = micrograms per liter

Test for	How often	Health effects for your baby	What to look for on your lab report
Arsenic	Every five years	Arsenic can make it hard for children to learn and put them more at a risk of getting cancer in the bladder, lungs and liver. Arsenic can also lead to diabetes, heart disease and skin problems.	The Health Department recommends treating the water at levels above 1 µg/L (0.001 mg/L).
Coliform bacteria	Every year	Coliform bacteria might mean that other germs may be in your water. These germs may cause diarrhea, vomiting, cramps, nausea, headaches, fever and fatigue. Babies and children are more likely to get sick or die from the sickness caused by these germs.	Any level may be harmful.
Fluoride	Every five years	The right amount of fluoride helps prevent tooth decay. Your baby's doctor or dentist can help make sure your baby gets the right amount.	The ideal level is 0.7 mg/L to protect teeth. The Health Department recommends treating the water at levels above 4 mg/L.
Lead	Every five years	Lead can hurt the brain, kidneys and nervous system. Lead can also slow down growth and development, make it hard to learn, damage hearing and speech, and cause behavior problems in children. Babies, children under 6 years old and pregnant people are at special risk.	Any level is harmful.
Manganese	Every five years	Manganese can cause problems with memory, attention, and motor skills. It can also make it hard for children to learn and can cause behavior problems.	The Health Department recommends treating the water at levels above 300 µg/L (0.300 mg/L).
Nitrate	Every five years	Nitrate can affect how blood carries oxygen and can cause methemoglobinemia (also known as blue baby syndrome). Methemoglobinemia can cause skin to turn a blue color and cause babies to become seriously sick or even die. Bottle-fed babies under six months old are at the highest risk.	A level above 10 mg/L is harmful.