Is my well water safe?

Having clean well water is important. For homes that use individual water wells, there can be certain risks involved. The water in your well can be exposed to and become contaminated from various hazards. The water in your well can make you sick if it is not safe. Since there are no federal or state monitoring regulations for private wells, it is the homeowner's responsibility to make sure their well water is safe to drink. Well water may not be safe to drink if:

- you have frequent and unexplained illnesses in your household
- your neighbors find toxic chemicals in their well water
- you detect a difference in the taste, smell, or color of your well water
- you spill fertilizers, pesticides, oil, gasoline, or other toxic substances on the ground near the well or in the well

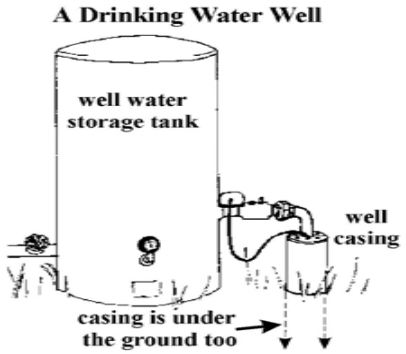
What are some ways to keep my well water safe?

- Doing regular well inspections and disinfections
- Keeping poisons, pesticides, chemicals, and pet waste off the ground and away from your well
- Taking proper care of your septic system
- Having your well professionally tested at least once a year

How do I inspect my well?

Things can enter into your well to harm you and your family. It is important to regularly inspect your well for sources of contamination. Other potential problems can exist with the slab, the well screen, the building covering the well, and/or landscaping. What are some first signs of dangers that you should have a professional examine?

- Cracks and holes in the well casing
- A moveable well casing
- A leaking valve or hearing running water from the casing



Potential sources of well water contamination

Pesticides, including insecticides and herbicides, used to kill bugs and plants should be used sparingly. Fuels like gasoline and oil are also poisons that should not be stored near a well. Do not store gasoline operated equipment such as lawn mowers near your well because gasoline or oil can leak onto the ground and travel to the water that is in your well. It is important to keep assorted chemicals and pet waste 100 feet away from your well. These chemicals and waste can drain onto the ground and get into the water that is in your well.

Buy only enough chemicals like pesticides and fuels that you need. Do not keep half empty containers around or reuse the containers for any other purpose. Wrap empty containers in paper and throw them into the trash or take them to a collection facility for disposal.

Well water disinfection

To disinfect your well, household bleach should be used. The bleach should be poured into the well taking care to include the sides of the well. Connect a hose to the nearest faucet and direct water back into the well for about 30 minutes. The entire plumbing system should then be opened until chlorine is smelled in the water and then each opening closed and the chlorinated water allowed to stand in the system at least 10 to 12 hours. Seal all openings into the well (pipe and wire holes) and around the well cap. After chlorine has been in the system for the allotted time, run the plumbing openings until no chlorine is left in the water.

If I suspect a problem, who should I contact?

If you suspect there may be a problem with your well water, there are some guidelines you need to follow to protect your health.

- Contact a licensed well driller to inspect your water well.
- Have your well tested for bacteria regularly, especially after well water disinfections. Your County Cooperative Extension Service and County Health Department, Environmental Health Section, can test your well water for bacteria.
- Contact your County Health Department, Environmental Health Section, about taking proper care of your septic system. Septic system problems can also affect your well water quality.
- Contact your County Cooperative Extension Service to test your well water for chemicals.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Georgia Division of Public Health
Chemical Hazards Program
(404) 657-6534
http://health.state.ga.us/programs/hazards

County Health Department
Environmental Health Section
http://health.state.ga.us

University of Georgia
Cooperative Extension Service
County Extension Agent
www.caes.uga.edu/extension

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WATER WELL QUALITY

CHEMICAL HAZARDS PROGRAM

Environmental Health and Injury Prevention Branch

DIVISION OF PUBLIC HEALTH

DHR
GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES