
How safe is well water?

Water wells drilled according to State and County code requirements, by a [Certified Water Well Contractor](#), provide a safe and plentiful supply of water for the daily needs of a household. But even with these safeguards, the only way to be sure that your water is free from contaminants is to have it tested.

How do I have my water tested?

The Scott County Health Department participates in the Iowa Department of Public Health's Grants to Counties Program. Funded by mandate of the Ground Water Protection act of 1987, grants are made available to provide services that help prevent further contamination of Scott County ground water. This grant allows the Health Department to take a sample of your water at no cost to you. The sample is sent to a state certified laboratory, and the results are then mailed to you. Call the Health Department to set up a time to have your water sampled.

What will the water be tested for?

Your water will be tested for coliform bacteria and nitrates.

Coliform bacteria are a group of bacteria that are found throughout the environment. When you have coliform bacteria in your well water, a pathway exists that has allowed the bacteria to get in. The pathway may be caused by surface water run off, something wrong with the structure of the well, repairs without proper disinfection, or groundwater contamination.

Nitrogen is an element that occurs naturally in the environment. All sources of nitrogen are sources of nitrate. There is a potential health risk to infants under one year of age and pregnant or nursing mothers when drinking water that have high amounts of nitrates. This is because high nitrates can reduce how much oxygen the blood can carry and cause "blue-baby" syndrome (or methemoglobinemia).

High nitrate levels (45 mg/l as NO₃) are generally a sign of contamination from major nitrogen sources such as a sewage disposal system, animal manure, or nitrogen fertilizers. Nitrate contamination is more likely to occur in shallow wells or in wells that are poorly placed, constructed, or taken care of.



For more information about water well testing visit the State Hygienic Laboratory at the University of Iowa website <http://www.shl.uiowa.edu/env/privatewell/ordering.xml>

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