

## Did you know???

More than 75 percent of Wyoming's population relies on groundwater for part or all of their drinking water supply. This water comes from more than 90,000 wells. Around a farm, ranch, or rural home-site, there are many potential contaminants that should concern the owner.

There is no government agency (federal, state, or local) that regulates water quality from private drinking water wells in Wyoming. This means that the water quality of these wells is not regularly checked unless you take action to sample and test your water and protect and maintain your well.

## Drinking Water Wells

There are two state agencies that have regulations pertaining to construction specifications for water supply wells. The Wyoming State Engineer's Office provides well design requirements in the Regulations and Instructions, Part III, Water Well Minimum Construction Standards. The Department of Environmental Quality, Water Quality Division (WDEQ/WQD) does not regulate the construction of domestic (private) wells, but it is highly recommended that the well construction design complies with Chapter 26 and Chapter 12, Section 9 of Wyoming Water Quality Rules and Regulations which apply to public wells.

## Common Contaminants

Well owners should be aware of the potential contaminants that could impact their drinking water. Groundwater can be contaminated by natural processes, by waste disposal practices, and by spills or leaks. A contaminated water supply is unsafe to use without treatment even though you may have used the same water for years without getting sick. Consuming polluted groundwater could cause illness, especially in infants, young children, pregnant women, the elderly, and people whose immune systems are compromised. The contaminants listed below are common in Wyoming and could cause long or short-term health problems.



- Nitrates
- Bacteria
- Arsenic
- Uranium

[www.knowyourwell.org](http://www.knowyourwell.org)

## Test Your Water

DEQ recommends that you test your drinking water. As a private well owner, you are solely responsible for the quality of your drinking water. It is up to you to decide when and how to test your water. Testing is recommended when there is an unexplained illness in the household or there are changes in color, taste, or odor of the water. At a minimum, your water should be tested every year for bacteria, the most common water quality problem. Visit [www.knowyourwell.org](http://www.knowyourwell.org) to see the Tests for Specific Conditions or Contaminants to help select what to test for and find a laboratory.

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Testing more than once a year may be warranted in special situations:

- *There are unexplained illnesses in the household,*
- *Someone in your household is pregnant or nursing,*
- *You note a change in water taste, odor, color or clarity,*
- *There is a spill of chemicals or fuels into or near your well,*
- *Your neighbors find a contaminant in their water.*

## Laboratory info

The laboratory you choose should provide specific sampling instructions and clean bottles to collect the water sample. Carefully follow instructions for taking samples. Sampling is the most important part of testing. A carelessly collected sample can give you inaccurate results. The amount of a specific contaminant in your water sample will be expressed as a concentration or a specific weight of the substance in a specific volume of water. The test results may use various symbols and abbreviations.

Check with individual laboratories to get prices. Ask how soon you should expect results and about the information that will be provided with the test results. A good lab should help you interpret the results and make sense of the scientific data.

The important question is whether the contaminant poses a health threat at that particular concentration. Compare your water test results to the federal standards. Upon receiving water test results, ask the lab if there are any contaminants that present a health risk.

It is a good idea to follow-up with a second test taken at a different time of year before you decide if any water treatment is needed. When considering a water treatment device, make sure its specifications match up to the substances and concentrations you wish to treat. Also, there are performance testing programs for treatment systems, such as the NSF International.

Visit [www.knowyourwell.org](http://www.knowyourwell.org) for more information on testing and laboratories.

March 13th is

"Know Your Well Day".

[www.knowyourwell.org](http://www.knowyourwell.org)

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your drinking water.**

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