



Well Water and Your Baby

How to Test

You are responsible for keeping your well water safe and testing it as needed. Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) recommends you use an accredited laboratory to test your water. Contact a laboratory to get sample containers and instructions, or ask your county environmental or public health services if they provide well testing services. The laboratory can answer questions about how to take samples, cost, and how long it will take to receive your results.

Accredited Labs in Minnesota Accepting Samples from Private Well Owners (PDF)

(www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/water/docs/wells/waterquality/labmap.pdf)

What Next?

Learn more about water quality issues and steps you can take if there is an unsafe level of a contaminant in your water.

Well Testing, Results, and Options

(www.health.state.mn.us/welltesting)

Most contaminants can be reduced through properly maintained home water treatment.

Home Water Treatment Fact Sheet

(www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/water/factsheet/hometreatment.html)

Resources

Well Owner's Handbook: A Consumer's Guide to Water Wells in Minnesota (PDF)

(www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/water/docs/wells/construction/handbook.pdf)

Print or order this brochure online

(See Of Interest section of the webpage)

Safe Drinking Water for Your Baby

(www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/water/wells/waterquality/safebaby.html)



Contact

Minnesota Department of Health
625 Robert Street North
P.O. Box 64975
St. Paul, MN 55164-0975
651-201-4600 or 800-383-9808
health.privatewells@state.mn.us
www.health.state.mn.us/wells

To obtain this information in a different format contact:
651-201-4600.

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Test your well water before or during pregnancy

Most private well water in Minnesota is safe, but some well water may have contaminants in it that can make babies sick or harm their development. The only way to know if your well water is safe for your baby is to have it tested. We take extra steps to protect babies in our homes by using safety latches on cabinets and covering electrical outlets. Testing your private well is another easy step to make sure your baby has a healthy start!

Babies are at greater risk of harm from water contaminants

Babies drink more water for their size than older children and adults. Babies' developing brains and organs can be injured or damaged more easily, and their bodies are not very good at getting rid of harmful substances. Some contaminants can pass from mother to baby during pregnancy.



It is important to test the water that you use for drinking or preparing baby formula. This may be water from the faucet at your kitchen sink, a dispenser on your refrigerator door, a treatment system with a separate tap near your sink, or a filtration pitcher.

Test for	How often	Health impacts for baby	What to look for on your lab report
			mg/L (milligrams per liter) = ppm (parts per million) µg/L (micrograms per liter) = ppb (parts per billion)
Coliform bacteria	Every year	Coliform bacteria can indicate that germs such as bacteria, viruses, or parasites may be in your water. These may cause diarrhea, vomiting, cramps, nausea, headaches, fever, and fatigue. Infants and children are more likely to get sick from these germs.	Any level may be harmful.
Nitrate	Every year	High levels of nitrate can affect how blood carries oxygen causing a condition commonly known as blue baby syndrome which can result in serious illness or death. Bottle-fed infants under six months old are at the highest risk of developing blue baby syndrome.	A level above 10 mg/L can be harmful
Lead	At least once	Lead can damage the brain, kidneys, and nervous system. Lead can also slow development or cause learning, behavior, and hearing problems for children. Babies, children under six years old, and pregnant women are at the highest health risks from lead.	Any level is harmful.
Manganese	At least once	High levels of manganese can cause problems with memory, attention, and motor skills. It can also cause learning and behavior problems in infants and children.	A level above 100 µg/L can be harmful.
Arsenic	At least once	High levels of arsenic can contribute to reduced intelligence in children and increased risk of cancers in the bladder, lungs, and liver. Arsenic can also contribute to diabetes, heart disease, and skin problems.	Any level may be harmful. If the level is above 10 µg/L, MDH strongly recommends treating the water or finding a different source of water.
Fluoride	At least once	The right amount of fluoride helps prevent tooth decay. Too much fluoride can change how tooth enamel looks.	The recommended level is 0.7 mg/L to protect teeth. Your baby's doctor can make sure they are getting the right amount.