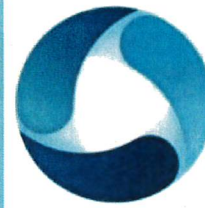


Well Owners: Is your drinking water safe?



MCD
MIAMI CONSERVANCY DISTRICT

By Mike Ekberg, MCD manager for water resources monitoring and analysis

CONTAMINATION IS MORE COMMON THAN YOU THINK

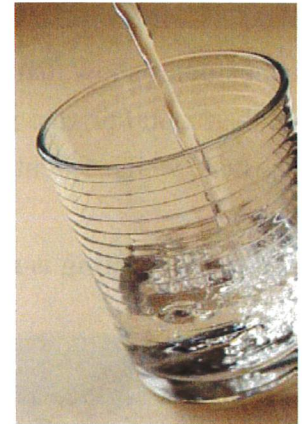
Hey **well owners**, when's the last time you had your drinking water tested? If you're like many well owners in the United States, you probably have never tested your water. Why should you bother? You have plenty of water and it tastes good, right?

If you want to be sure your drinking water is safe, you need to get it tested.

TEST AT LEAST ANNUALLY

The [National Ground Water Association](#) (NGWA) recommends well owners test their water at least annually for bacteria, nitrates, and contaminants specific to your area. Consider more frequent testing if:

- There is a **change in taste, odor, or appearance** of well water.
- The well has a **history of contamination**.
- The well is near a **septic system**.
- There have been **recurring incidents of gastrointestinal illness**.
- An **infant** is living in the home.
- **Home water treatment equipment** has been installed.



In our area, I recommend the following tests:

- **E. coli** – *E. coli* bacteria is a specific indication of fecal contamination in the well. Its presence is a warning that disease-causing bacteria may have entered the well.
- **Nitrate** – Nitrate gets into drinking water from fertilizers, manure, and septic systems. It also occurs naturally. High nitrate levels present a health concern for infants if the water is mixed with formula. High nitrate levels can also suggest other toxins such as bacteria and pesticides.
- **Arsenic** – Arsenic is naturally occurring in groundwater. It's linked to various cancers and other health issues.
- **Manganese** – Manganese also occurs in nature and can be present in groundwater. At high enough levels, it may cause brain damage.
- **Lead** – Lead typically gets into drinking water from corroded pipes and plumbing fixtures. If your home was built prior to 1986, it's more likely to have lead pipes, fixtures, and solder.

GET HELP WITH TESTING

Currently, there are two labs in our area that will test your water. Call them for fees and more information:

Montgomery County Environmental Laboratory
4257 Dryden Road, Dayton, OH 45439
(937) 781-3016

Pace Analytical Services, Inc. - Dayton
25 Holiday Drive, Englewood, OH 45322
(800) 723-5227

Other resources to help you understand how to test your well water:

The Ohio Environmental Protection Agency (OEPA) has a [website](#) with contact information about [state-certified labs](#) that can help with testing. [Heidelberg University](#) also offers testing services.

The Ohio State University (OSU) also offers an [on-line tool](#) to help you understand the test results. The OSU site offers a lot of information for well owners.

BIGGER PROBLEM THAN YOU THINK

Recent studies show that private well contamination is not rare. A 2009 United States Geological Survey study of more than 2,000 private wells found about 23 percent of the wells had problems. More recently, MCD surveyed 107 private wells. Twenty percent of those wells had unsafe levels of arsenic in the water.

The need for testing is real. Now go out and get your water tested!

RESOURCES

National Groundwater Association - for well owners - <http://www.wellowner.org/water-quality/water-testing/>

Ohio EPA – about drinking water - <http://www.epa.state.oh.us/ddagw/DrinkingandGroundWaters.aspx>

Ohio EPA – list of certified water testing labs - <http://www.epa.state.oh.us/ddagw/labcert.aspx>

OSU Extension – for well owners - <http://ohiowatersheds.osu.edu/know-your-well-water/well-water-interpretation-tool>

Heidelberg University - for well owners - <http://www.heidelberg.edu/academiclife/distinctive/ncwqr/water/well>