

WELL WATER: A Safety Checklist

APPROXIMATELY 40% of New Brunswickers depend on drilled, dug, or spring-fed wells for their drinking and household water. It's important to know how to ensure the safety of your well water supply.

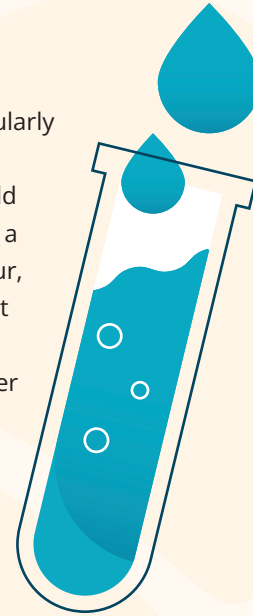
MAINTENANCE

Wells are supplied by aquifers, or underground reserves, which are generally protected by the overlying soil. However, well water can be affected by improperly maintained or damaged well casings. That's why regular maintenance is so important.

- 1 Periodically inspect your well for problems such as: cracked, corroded, or damaged well casings, pumps, or pipes; or a broken or missing well cap.
- 2 Slope the surrounding area to drain surface runoff away from the well.
- 3 Disinfect wells through chlorination at least once per year in the spring or fall, or after long periods of non-use. An instructional brochure is available from the Department of Environment and Local Government.
- 4 Avoid mixing or using household pesticides or fertilizers, degreasers, fuels, and other pollutants near the well.
- 5 Do not dispose of wastes in dry or abandoned wells.
- 6 Protect your well and keep the area free from pet and animal waste.
- 7 Do not cut off the well casing below the land surface. If this has already occurred, have the casing extended to 30 cm above ground level.
- 8 Complete routine septic system maintenance every 2-3 years as recommended by the Department of Health and never dispose of hazardous materials in a septic system.
- 9 Any new well construction, modification, or decommissioning must be carried out by a licensed well driller.

TESTING

Well water should be tested regularly for the presence of bacteria and chemical contamination. It should be tested immediately if there is a change in its clarity, colour, odour, or taste, or if you have any doubt regarding its safety. The risk of well contamination may be higher after an extended dry spell, following heavy rains, or after lengthy period of non-use.



- 1 Well water should be tested for bacteria twice per year, in spring and fall.
- 2 Test for inorganic compounds (such as nitrates, arsenic, and fluoride) every two to three years.
- 3 Test for organic compounds if there has been a recent incident, like a petroleum spill near the well, or if the water source has been exposed to chemicals.
- 4 Carefully follow all instructions for taking a water sample and use RPC Analytical Services or an accredited laboratory to have the sample analyzed.
- 5 Seek advice for testing and corrective action from the Department of Environment and Local Government, the Department of Health, a licensed well driller, or water treatment specialist.



SAMPLE COLLECTION

Water sampling kits can be obtained from select Service New Brunswick service centre locations as well as from RPC Analytical Services offices in Fredericton and Moncton. Each sampling kit contains: a small clear plastic sample bottle, a water sample submission form and instructions entitled 'Water Sampling Procedure.'

- 1 Read and follow sampling instructions carefully to ensure sample integrity. It is important to keep the sample refrigerated.
- 2 Fill out the water sample submission form. Do not forget the following information:
 - full name
 - complete address
 - daytime phone number
 - sample date and time
 - property identification number (PID), which can be found on your tax form or by calling Service New Brunswick at: 1-888-762-8600.
- 3 Return your refrigerated water sample within 24 hours of collection. Return both the sample and the submission form to the same place you received your water sample kit.
- 4 Refer to the 'Water Sampling Procedure' for a complete list of pick-up and drop-off locations. They can also be found here.

A FINAL NOTE

When you request to have your water tested for bacteria, well water samples analyzed at the RPC Analytical Services laboratory are tested for two primary sources of bacteria: total coliforms, which occur naturally in soil and in the intestines of humans and animals, and Escherichia coli, or E. coli which are found only in the intestines of humans and animals.

The results of your well water test will be shared with you and will be compared to the maximum acceptable concentrations for bacteria under the New Brunswick Drinking Water Quality Guidelines.

WE'RE HERE TO HELP. FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

Department of Environment and Local Government,
Healthy Environments Branch

- 506 453 2690
- elg/egl-info@gnb.ca
- www.gnb.ca/environment

