



# Your Well Water

## A Safety Checklist

Many New Brunswickers depend on drilled, dug, or spring-fed domestic wells for drinking water, along with other household uses, and so it's important to know what you can do to ensure the safety of your well water supply.



## Maintaining Your Well

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.

*The checklist:*

- ◆ Periodically inspect parts of the well for problems such as:
  - cracked, corroded, or damaged well casings, pumps, or pipes, or
  - a broken or missing well cap.
- ◆ Slope the area around the well to drain surface runoff away from the well.
- ◆ Disinfect drinking water wells with chlorine or bleach at least once per year, or after long periods of non-use. (An instructional brochure on how to chlorinate your well water is available from the Department of Environment and Local Government.)
- ◆ Have the well tested at least once a year for coliform bacteria. Tests for inorganic parameters such as nitrates, arsenic, and fluoride should be conducted at least every two years. The term "parameters" refers to the minerals, chemicals and bacteria that are tested in the water sample.
- ◆ Any new well construction, modification, or decommissioning must be carried out by a licensed water well contractor.
- ◆ Avoid mixing or using pesticides, fertilizers, degreasers, fuels, and other pollutants near the well, and never dispose of hazardous materials in a septic system.

- ◆ Do not dispose of wastes in dry wells or in abandoned wells.
- ◆ Avoid housing pets near your well and keep the area free of pet waste.
- ◆ Do not cut off the well casing below the land surface, and if this has already occurred, have the casing extended to 30 cm above ground level.
- ◆ Pump and inspect septic systems as often as recommended by the Department of Health.

## Testing Your Well Water

Well water should be tested for the presence of bacteria regularly and for chemical contamination if it is suspected. In addition to regular tests, well water should be tested immediately if there is any change in its clarity, colour, odour or taste, or if there has been a significant change or new development on the surrounding land. If at any time, you have any doubt as to the safety of your private water supply, you should have it tested as soon as possible. Through regular assessment and testing of drinking water, the safety of your well water can be verified.

*The checklist:*

- ◆ Sample your well water when the probability of contamination is greatest: early spring just after the thaw, after an extended dry spell, following heavy rains or after lengthy periods of non-use.
- ◆ Carefully follow all instructions for taking a water sample and use a nationally accredited laboratory to have the sample analyzed.
- ◆ Seek advice for both testing and any corrective action from the Departments of Environment and Local Government, or Health.

## How To Collect a Well Water Sample for Bacteria Testing

Well water bacteria 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) a small clear plastic sample bottle, b) a water sample submission form, and c) instructions entitled 'Water Sampling Procedure'.

*The Checklist:*

- ◆ Read and follow the water sampling instructions carefully to ensure the accuracy of the sample. Note that it is important to keep the sample refrigerated or on freezer packs.
- ◆ Fill out the water sample submission form. Do not forget the following important information:
  - full name,
  - complete address,
  - daytime phone number,
  - sampling date and time, and
  - property identification number (PID).This number can be found on your property tax form or by calling Service New Brunswick at: 1-888-762-8600.
- ◆ Be sure to return the water sample together with the submission form to the same place that you received your water sample kit. This must be done on the morning of the day that the sample was taken. Refer to the water sampling procedure for a complete listing of pick-up and drop-off locations and business hours.

## The Results of Your Well Water Test for Bacteria

Well water samples analyzed at the Provincial 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 sent to you in the mail. This information tells you what the results were for your well, and what the maximum acceptable concentrations are for bacteria under the Provincial Department of Health Water Quality Guidelines.

***To ensure a safe and enjoyable water supply, it is important to learn about the steps you can take to prevent contamination, assess your water quality, and act when there are problems. We're here to help, so please contact us if you have any questions, or require additional information.***

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