

# Is My Well Water Safe to Drink?

## What could be in my well water?

**Nitrate and coliform bacteria** are common contaminants in wells. They can seep into wells from septic tanks, manure, or fertilizers.


**These contaminants can be harmful to your family** especially babies, pregnant women and older adults. High levels of nitrate in drinking water can cause blue baby syndrome. Without medical treatment, this illness can be fatal. Drinking well water with coliform bacteria can cause diarrhea or other illnesses.

## What can I do?

- 1. Test your well water.** Yakima Health District recommends that you or your landlord test every year for nitrate and total coliform bacteria.
- 2. Read your results** to find out if your well water has high nitrate or total coliform bacteria. Yakima Health District can help you understand your results.

**If your well has high nitrate or total coliform bacteria:**

- 3. Do not drink your well water.** Bottled water is a safe option for drinking and cooking.
- 4. Address the problem.** Here are some of your options:
  - High nitrate: For a long-term solution, drill a new well or connect to a city water system. For a short-term solution, install a reverse osmosis system. This filter removes nitrate from water.
  - Total coliform bacteria: Add bleach to your well. Call Yakima Health District to find out how much you should add.



**You can't see, taste, or smell**  
nitrate or total coliform bacteria

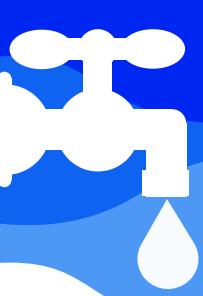


## Questions?

Call the  
**Yakima Health District**  
(509) 249-6508

## Protect Your Family

## Test Your Well



# Testing Your Well is Easy!

Test your well water every year for **nitrate** and **total coliform bacteria**. Here are the typical steps for nitrate testing. The steps for total coliform bacteria can be found on this website: [www.doh.wa.gov/Portals/1/Documents/Pubs/331-222.pdf](http://www.doh.wa.gov/Portals/1/Documents/Pubs/331-222.pdf). When you pick up your testing bottles from the lab, ask for their instructions. Follow the instructions carefully.

## Steps for Nitrate Testing



Pick a faucet that has two handles and does not leak.



Remove any hoses, filters, or screens from the tap.



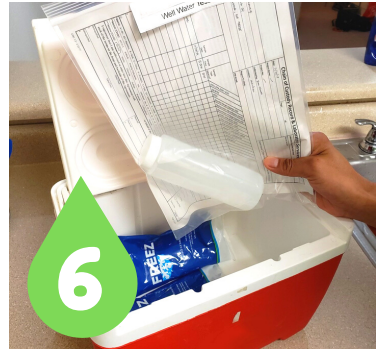
Turn on the cold water. Let the water run for 5 minutes.



Fill the bottle up to the shoulder. Close the lid tightly.



Fill out the order form. Don't forget the date and time.



Keep the bottle cold. Take it to the lab as soon as possible or within 24 hours.

## Who do I call?

## Certified Testing Labs in Yakima County:

Valley Environmental  
201 E D St  
Yakima, WA 98901  
509-575-3999

Cascade Analytical  
1008 W Ahtanum  
Yakima, WA 98903  
509-452-7707

Ag Health Labs  
445 Barnard Blvd  
Sunnyside, WA 98944  
509-836-2020

## Costs

Nitrate: \$18 to \$48  
Total coliform: \$20 to \$28  
(for 2019)



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<https://yakimacounty.us/275/Health-District>

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