Information on wells and water from Well Aware.ca

What Could Be Wrong With My Water?

Even though your water may appear to be fine, there are many possible contaminants that you cannot taste, see or smell.

Drinking contaminated well water can make you and your family members ill.

Bacterial contamination might cause stomach cramps, diarrhea, vomiting or other problems.

Chemical contamination is equally dangerous. The effects can vary.

Test Your Well Water For Indicators Of Bacterial Contamination

It is recommended that you test your well water regularly.

Testing at least three times a year for bacteria is recommended by the Ontario Ministry of the Environment and the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care.

Early spring is a good time to test your well water for bacteria. Another good time is the day after a heavy rainfall. Melting snow and running water can carry surface contaminants into your well. If your well water is safe under these conditions, it is most likely to be safe the rest of the year.

Test your water even if your water seems fine, because you cannot always taste, smell or see bacteria or other contaminants. Do not rely on your neighbour's test results—wells that are only a few steps apart could have different water quality.

Besides routine testing, you should also test:

- After major plumbing work or well repairs.
- If you detect changes in water quality, including taste, odour, and appearance.
- If regular well users experience unexplained health problems which could be water related (e.g. Stomach cramps, diarrhea or vomiting.

Frequency Of Testing For Bacteria

These tests are free. Contact your local Health Unit (see "Water Testing Location" on Page 3).

A single test for total coliforms and E. Coli is not always enough to determine the quality of your well water. If your well has not been tested regularly, submit three samples at least one to three weeks apart. Do not send several samples at the same time. If the well consistently shows acceptable total coliform and E. Coli counts, sample at least three times a year.

How To Sample For Bacteria

The following rules apply to routine sampling for bacteria:

- Use the water sample bottle provided by the Health Unit to collect your sample.
- A preservative, sodium thiosulphate in granular form is in the bottle. It is intended to be there. This material could cause a reaction if ingested or inhaled; therefore, bottles should not be handled by young children.
- Select a non-swivel tap, remove aerators and other attachments from your tap.
- Disinfect the end of the tap with one part household bleach to ten parts water. (Disinfecting with a flame in not recommended because this can damage the tap.)
- Run cold tap water for two to three minutes.
- Remove the sample-bottle lid (if the tamper-proof ring has separated from the cap, use a new bottle).
- Do not touch the bottle lip, inside the lid or inside of the bottle—never set the lid down.
- Do not rinse the bottle.
- Fill the sample bottle to the indicator line directly from the tap without changing the flow of water (overflowing the bottle risks losing the preservative that comes with the bottle).
- Replace the lid tightly and complete the form that came with the bottle.
- Refrigerate the sample after collection (do not freeze) and, if possible, transport in a cooler.
- Return the sample and form to the drop off location within 24 hours of collection.

Huntsville Water Testing Location

Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit
34 Chaffey Street

The building is known as "the pink house". From King William, turn north on Chaffey—Wimpy's Diner is on that corner. #34 is on your right at the curve as Chaffey joins West Road.

Water samples may be dropped off : Monday to Thursday 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.
(Closed between 12:30 p.m. and 1:30 p.m.)
NEVER DROP OFF BOTTLES ON FRIDAYS!!

Times might vary for holiday closures. If in doubt, call Your Health Connection at 705-721-7520 or 1-877-721-7520

Sample Bottle

We are providing a special Health Unit sample bottle. This type of bottle must be used for water testing. The bottles have a shelf life; the one provided will be good until the date on the wrapper, as long as the cap is not removed before you are ready to test your water. Additional bottles may be obtained from the Health Unit.

Please carefully read the instructions enclosed with the bottle AND complete the forms.