

# Nitrate in Private Well Water

## Nitrate is a naturally occurring molecule found in plants and animals.

Nitrate can get into groundwater from fertilizers and human and animal waste. Exposure to high levels of nitrate can cause blue baby syndrome, and may increase risk of certain birth defects, thyroid disease, and certain types of cancer.

## Test your well for nitrate regularly.



Test at least once a year.



Test right away if your water's color, taste, or smell changes.



Test before pregnant people use the water or it is given to babies.



When testing, you should use a [Wisconsin certified lab](#).\*

## Take action if the nitrate level is equal to or greater than 10 milligrams per liter (mg/L).



People who are or may become pregnant should immediately use a different source of water for drinking and making foods that take up a lot of water (like rice, oatmeal, and jello).



A different source of water should also be used to make baby formula and given to babies to drink.

Options for different water include:



Bottled water



Water from a well without issues



Water from a public system



The water can still be used for bathing, brushing teeth, and washing dishes.



Collect a second sample to verify the results.

## Take additional actions if nitrate is still high.



Everyone should use the different source of water for drinking and making foods that take up a lot of water.



Find a long-term solution. This may be installing a certified treatment device or drilling a new well.\*

\*Additional information is available in the *Resource Guide*.



## ★ Resource Guide ★



Households with pregnant people and young children may be eligible for **free testing** through their local health department. You can find contact information for your health department at [www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/lh-depts/counties/index.htm](http://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/lh-depts/counties/index.htm).



When testing, you should use a **lab** certified by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR). You can find a list of certified labs at [dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/labCert/certified-lab-lists](http://dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/labCert/certified-lab-lists).



The DNR provides **grants** to help address contamination in private wells. Learn about eligibility and covered expenses at [dnr.wisconsin.gov/aid/WellCompensation.html](http://dnr.wisconsin.gov/aid/WellCompensation.html).



Our *Water Treatment Devices for Private Well Contaminants* guide has information on certified **treatment devices** for nitrate: [www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/publications/p03494.pdf](http://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/publications/p03494.pdf).



### You should also test for arsenic and bacteria regularly.

You can find information on these and other substances to consider testing at: [www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/water/private.htm](http://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/water/private.htm).



You can find all this information and more at [www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/water/nitrate.htm](http://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/water/nitrate.htm).

#### Questions? Concerns?

Contact us at  
[DHSEnvHealth@wi.gov](mailto:DHSEnvHealth@wi.gov)  
or 608-266-1120.