



# Nitrite in Drinking Water

**Nitrite is a naturally occurring molecule found in plants and animals.**



[Nitrite](#) can get into groundwater from fertilizers and human and animal waste. It can also be formed in drinking water if certain bacteria are present. Exposure to high levels of nitrite can cause blue baby syndrome and may increase risk of certain birth defects, thyroid disease, and certain types of cancer.

## Know your water quality.

-  Public water users can check their water system's consumer confidence report or check in with their water system.\*
-  Private well users should test for nitrate and nitrite combined at least once a year. Test before pregnant people use the water or it is given to babies. You can also test for nitrite alone.

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

## Take action if the nitrite level is equal to or greater than 1 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 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 public system without issues



Water from a private well without issues



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



Private well users should collect a second sample to verify the results.

## Take long-term action to reduce exposure.



Public water users should follow the instructions provided by their water utility. Public water systems are required to take steps to address elevated nitrite levels.



Private well users should work to find a long-term solution. This may be installing a certified treatment device or drilling a new well.\*



## ★ Resource Guide ★



Your water system's **consumer confidence report** describes where your water comes from, what contaminants were detected, and if there are any violations. To get a copy, check your water system's webpage or contact them directly.



Households with pregnant people and young children may be eligible for **free private well testing** for nitrate, bacteria, and certain metals 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, private well users 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). These devices can also be used for nitrite.



### **Private well users should test for arsenic, bacteria, and nitrate 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  
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