

Arsenic in Private Well Water

High levels of arsenic can cause skin rashes, stomach issues, or cancer. Infants and young children are especially sensitive to arsenic as high levels can increase the risk of lung cancer and may affect learning.

Test Your Well for Arsenic Regularly

Because you cannot smell, taste, or see arsenic in your water, the DNR (Department of Natural Resources) recommends you **test your well for arsenic at least once every five years**.

You should test more often if:



Water level changes.

You notice a change in the color, taste, or smell of the water.

Test right away

You or homes around you have had arsenic before.

You live in Outagamie, Winnebago, or Brown counties.

Test once a year

High levels of arsenic are most common in northeastern Wisconsin, but can be found across the state.

Arsenic comes naturally from the earth but also from old pesticides, treated wood, and certain foods such as grains.

Understand Your Well Test Results

As a well owner, you are responsible for your own water. Your local health department can help explain your test results and options for fixing and improving your well.

If your arsenic level is:



Less than 10 µg/L

Water is safe for drinking, preparing food, bathing, and household chores.



10-99 µg/L

Do not drink the water.
Do not use the water to prepare foods that use a lot of water like infant formula, soup, and rice.
Do not boil the water.



100 µg/L or more

Do not drink the water.
Do not prepare food. Do not boil the water.
Do not use the water for bathing or household chores. You can use the water for flushing toilets.



Take Action to Fix Your Well!

The next page has options for keeping you and your family safe. Remember to regularly test your water as it can change over time.

WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES

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Steps to take if your well has high arsenic:

1. Retest your well to confirm results

Collect a second sample (called a “confirmation sample”) to be sure that the first result is accurate.

2. Inspect your well

- Inspect the seal on the well cap and the above-ground casing for holes, cracks, or other signs that water or other items may be entering the well.
- Consider having the well inspected by a [licensed well driller or pump installer](#).

3. Use a safe water source

Use bottled water or water from a well without an arsenic problem for drinking and preparing food until you find a long-term solution. Do not boil the water from your well as this does not remove the arsenic.

4. Find a long-term solution

The following are long-term solutions to find a way to drink safe water.

\$\$ Install a water treatment system

- Work with a water treatment professional to select a [certified treatment device](#). **DNR approval may be required before installing a water treatment system.**
- These systems require regular maintenance and testing to ensure they are working properly.
- **Point of Use (POU)** systems treat water coming from one faucet, like a kitchen sink, but they can use a lot of water and are not as effective with high levels.
- **Point of Entry (POE)** systems treat all water coming into the house and provide safe drinking water throughout the house.

\$\$\$ Drill a new well

- A new well is often a permanent solution, although there is no guarantee that it will be free from contaminants. It is always important to work with a [licensed well driller](#).
- DNR has special [well construction requirements](#) for arsenic in certain parts of Wisconsin.
- Financial help may be available in limited situations. Check out [DNR Well Compensation Grant Program](#) for more information.

\$\$\$ Connect to a Public Water Supply or Community Well

- Connecting to a public water supply can provide a permanent safe water supply; however, annexation may be required. Contact your local government with questions.
- Connecting to a community well can also provide a permanent safe water supply where costs for maintaining and testing the well are shared by multiple families.