

Maine Water Testing Labs

When you call a lab, tell them the tests you need. Ask if they are certified to do all of them or will use another certified lab.

Auburn

A&L Lab
207-784-5354

Augusta

State of Maine Public
Health & Environmental
Testing Lab
1-866-522-4385

Caribou

Northern Maine Water
Testing Service
207-492-2460

Newport

ClearWater Labs
207-368-5786

North Windham

McFarland Associates
207-892-4485

Presque Isle

Micmac Environmental
Laboratory
800-750-1972

Springvale

Nelson Analytical
Testing Lab
207-324-2074

Topsham

Wright-Pierce Engineers
207-725-8721

Waterville

Northeast Labs Inc.
207-873-7711

Westbrook

Katahdin Analytical
Services
207-874-2400

West Rockport

Aqua Maine Inc.,
Clear Lake Industries
207-236-8428

Yarmouth

Maine Environmental Lab
207-846-6569

For an up-to-date list of labs certified for water testing:

- Call the Maine Lab Certification Officer at: 207-287-1929
- Go to: <http://wellwater.maine.gov>

Action List

Check off steps you'll take to make sure your well water is safe:

- Make sure the area around the well is clean and free of animal waste and other pollution
- Pay attention to changes in color, taste, and smell of the water
- Get a water test for bacteria, nitrates, and nitrites every year
- Get water tests for all items on the Well Testing Schedule every 3 to 5 years

Is Your Well Water Safe to Drink?



**Many Maine wells have too much
Arsenic • Radon • Uranium**

Protect your family. Test your well.

- Follow the **Well Testing Schedule** inside.
- Find a Maine lab certified for well water testing on the back page.

Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention
Environmental and Occupational Health Program
Toll Free in Maine: 866-292-3474
<http://wellwater.maine.gov>

Our Well Water Looks, Smells, and Tastes Fine. Why Should We Test It?

Your well water may NOT be safe to drink.

- **Germs** (bacteria and viruses) can get into well water if the well casing is damaged or if you have a dug or shallow well.
- **Chemicals** like arsenic, radon and uranium get into Maine wells from nature. They're in the rocks and can dissolve in water. Lead from older pipes can also dissolve in water.

The Result: Both germs and chemicals may cause unpleasant symptoms, such as upset stomach or the runs (diarrhea). Some of the chemicals also increase the chance of cancer. Even if you've tested before, it may be time to test again.

When and What Do We Test?

Test

- **Every year** for bacteria, nitrates, and nitrites.
- **Every 3 to 5 years** for all chemicals listed on the [Well Testing Schedule](#) on page 4.

Next Steps:

Call a Lab and Test Your Water

- Step 1** Find a lab listed on the back page and call them.
- Step 2** Tell the lab the water tests you need based on the [Well Testing Schedule](#) on page 4. Ask if they're certified to do all the tests or will use another certified lab.
- Step 3** Wait for the water test kits to arrive in the mail. The kits include empty bottles, directions, and forms to fill out.
- Step 4** Read the directions, fill the bottles with tap water, and mail them back to the lab.
- Step 5** Watch for test results in the mail. Compare your results with the Safe Limits on the [Well Testing Schedule](#). If you're not 100% sure you understand the test results, call us toll free in Maine: 866-292-3474.

Call Us To Help You Understand Water Test Results and "Next Steps"



Eric Frohmberg, Andy Smith, and Deb Rice

Toxicologists at the Maine CDC who will answer your calls

Water test results can be hard to understand. A lab will report most results in measurement units such as **mg/L** (read: **milligrams per liter**) or **ug/L** (read: **micrograms per liter**). When you compare your results with the safe limits on the [Well Testing Schedule](#), make sure those letters match. If they don't match or if you have any questions, call us and we'll help you.

Some **water quality problems** are fairly quick and easy to fix. Others take longer and cost more. You may qualify for a low income loan to fix a problem. Before you spend money, give us a call.

Maine CDC Toll Free in Maine:

866-292-3474

<http://wellwater.maine.gov>

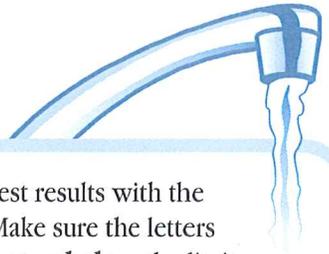
In accordance with Federal laws the Maine Department of Health and Human Services does not discriminate on the basis of race, age, color, national origin, or disability in admission or access to or treatment or employment in its programs and activities. The Department's Affirmative Action Coordinator has been designated to coordinate our efforts to comply with and implement these Federal laws and can be contacted for further information at: 221 State Street, Augusta, Maine 04333, (207) 287-2567, or Hearing Impaired call 1-800-606-0215

Produced Spring 2006 by these partners: Environmental and Occupational Health Program; Health & Environmental Testing Lab; Environmental Lab Certification Program; Radiation Control Program; Drinking Water Program; Oral Health Program; Lead Poisoning Prevention Program; Maine CDC, Department of Health and Human Services, 11 State House Station, Augusta, ME 04333

Funder: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Writer: AHEC Health Literacy Center, University of New England
Design: Campbell Creative



Well Testing Schedule



How to Read the Safe Limits

Compare the numbers and letters on your test results with the numbers and letters under the Safe Limits. Make sure the letters match and that your test result numbers are **at or below** the limits.

Well Problem	Can Cause	Safe Limit
--------------------	-----------------	------------

→ Test Every Year

- | | | |
|--|-----------------------------|-----------------|
| • Bacteria | Diarrhea and Vomiting | 0 |
| If coliform bacteria test is positive, test for E. coli bacteria | | |
| • Nitrate Nitrogen | Infant blood problems | 10 mg/L or less |
| • Nitrite Nitrogen | Infant blood problems | 1 mg/L or less |

→ Test Every 3 to 5 Years

- | | | |
|---|--|-------------------------------|
| • Arsenic | Cancer/Low Birth Weight | 10 ug/L or less |
| • Radon | Cancer | 4,000 pCi/L or less |
| • Uranium | Kidney Problems | 20 ug/L or less |
| • Lead - First Draw Test | Brain Damage | 10 ug/L or less |
| if planning a baby, pregnant, or have a child under age 6 | | |
| • Fluoride | Too little - increased chance of tooth decay | Between 0.6 mg/L and 1.7 mg/L |
| | Too much - stained teeth | |

Other Times to Test Your Well:

- You're expecting a baby.
- Your water changes in smell, taste, or color. Drink bottled water. Call us to learn which tests to do.
- You put in new parts to the system, like a new pump or new pipes or water softener. Test for bacteria.
- The well runs dry and comes back. Test for bacteria.
- You put in a water treatment system to fix a problem. Test the treated water each year for that problem.

If you're not 100% sure you understand your water test results, call us.

Maine CDC Toll Free in Maine: 866-292-3474 or <http://wellwater.maine.gov>

Maine CDC Water Experts Give You Answers

“I tested my well last year. Now you’re telling me to test it again this year.”

Lindy responds: You only need to test for germs (bacteria), nitrates and nitrites once a year. Checking for them will let you know if the water quality has gone downhill. You might not know if your well casing has cracked or if human or animal waste has polluted your water. This test will tell you. For wells used year round, the best time to test is late summer. For camps and summer homes, test each year when you move in.



Lindy from Maine
Drinking Water
Program

“I thought radon was an air pollution problem.”

Bob responds: Radon is a problem in both water and air in many houses in Maine. To learn if you have a radon problem you need to test both the air in your home and your well water. Radon in the air should be below 2 pCi/L. Call us for a list of labs certified to do both air and water radon tests.
Toll free in Maine: 1-800-232-0842



Bob from Maine
Radiation Control
Program

“My baby’s doctor asked if we had checked the fluoride level in our well water. I didn’t know why she would ask that.”

Judith responds: Most wells in Maine don’t have enough fluoride to help protect kids’ teeth from tooth decay. If the level is too low in your well water, your doctor or nurse can prescribe fluoride for your child. This will help give teeth a healthy start. Once in a while well water has too much fluoride. The only way to know for sure is to test for it.



Judith from the
Oral Health Program

Stan Calls a Lab and Tests His Water

Stan: I’d like to order some water tests to make sure my well water is safe.

According to the Well Testing Schedule I have here, I need these tests—bacteria, nitrates, nitrites, arsenic, radon, uranium, lead, and fluoride. Are these included in your standard test package?



Lab: Our standard test package includes most of those plus a few more such as pH and iron. It won’t cost you more money to get those extra results. And the extra results may be useful. The tests for radon and uranium are not part of the package, but we can get them done for you.

Stan: Are you certified to do all the tests?

Lab: Yes, except for radon and uranium, and we’ll send those to a certified lab for you. Do you need a first draw lead test?

Stan: Yes. We have 2 young children and another on the way.

Several days later

Stan: This was easier than I expected. The lab mailed me the water test kits I needed. All I had to do was fill up a few small bottles with tap water and mail them back with payment.

.....
The yearly test for bacteria, nitrates, and nitrites costs between \$20 and \$35. The tests you need every 3 to 5 years cost between \$50 and \$100. That’s a lot, but it protects your family.

