



Water Testing Options

At a minimum, every well should be tested annually for bacteria. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) also recommends testing for nitrate/nitrite and pH, and contaminants of local concern, such as arsenic, lead or radon. Home sellers should schedule their annual drinking water test for just before their property is listed. Buyers should have a drinking water test done as part of a home inspection.

Standard water tests will typically check for such things as PH, hardness, alkalinity, and turbidity. Standard mineral testing will include things like iron, calcium, manganese, copper, fluoride, Chloride and others. Coliform bacteria should also be checked in most well tests especially in rural areas. It is also highly recommended that you check for VOC's as well. Volatile organic compounds are the real bad stuff you don't want in your water. Examples of VOC's include gasoline compounds such as MtBE and benzene.

Total Coliforms

Coliform bacteria are microbes found in the digestive systems of warm-blooded animals, in soil, on plants, and in surface water. These microbes typically do not make you sick; however, because microbes that do cause disease are hard to test for in the water, "total coliforms" are tested instead. If the total coliform count is high, then it is very possible that harmful germs like viruses, bacteria, and parasites might also be found in the water.

Fecal Coliforms / Escherichia coli (E. coli)

Fecal coliform bacteria are a specific kind of total coliform. The feces (or stool) and digestive systems of humans and warm-blooded animals contain millions of fecal coliforms. E. coli is part of the fecal coliform group and may be tested for by itself. Fecal coliforms and E. coli are usually harmless. However, a positive test may mean that feces and harmful germs have found their way into your water system. These harmful germs can cause diarrhea, dysentery, and hepatitis. It is important not to confuse the test for the common and usually harmless WQI E. coli with a test for the more dangerous germ E. coli O157:H7.

pH

The pH level tells you how acidic or basic your water is. The pH level of the water can change how your water looks and tastes. If the pH of your water is too low or too high, it could damage your pipes, cause heavy metals like lead to leak out of the pipes into the water, and eventually make you sick.

Nitrate

Nitrate is naturally found in many types of food. However, high levels of nitrate in drinking water can make people sick. Nitrate in your well water can come from animal waste, private septic systems, wastewater, flooded sewers, polluted storm water runoff, fertilizers, agricultural runoff, and decaying plants. The presence of nitrate in well water also depends on the geology of the land around your well. A nitrate test is recommended for all wells. If the nitrate level in your water is higher than the EPA standards, you should consider other sources of water or ways to treat your water.

Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs)

VOCs are industrial and fuel-related chemicals that may cause adverse health effects at certain levels. Which VOCs to test for depends on where you live. Contact Signature Home Inspection to discuss which VOCs to test for in your region, including benzene, carbon tetrachloride, toluene, trichloroethylene, and methyl tertiary butyl ether (MTBE).

Contact us at **406-599-4396**

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