

# A homebuyer's guide to private well water



## Check each step during the purchase of your new home



### WELL CONSTRUCTION RECORDS

Request any available records, including construction logs, type of well, age, depth, capacity and yield.



### WELL MAINTENANCE WATER QUALITY RECORDS

Request any previous water quality or maintenance records, including any history of repairs, shock chlorination and age of the well pump, if available.



### CURRENT WELL CONDITION

A certified well contractor should inspect the condition of the well, ensure that it meets regulations and address any problems.



### TEST WATER EARLY

Well water should be tested as part of a home inspection. Test kits are available through the State Hygienic Laboratory or your county public health department. Submit the samples to the lab for analysis as soon as possible so there are no delays in the home closing.

NOTE: If you are purchasing a home with a HUD/FHA-VA loan package, you are required to have the well water tested for total coliform + E.coli, lead, nitrate and nitrite.



### IN-HOME TREATMENT SYSTEMS

Determine if there are any treatment systems installed, why they were needed, if they are in good working order and if there are any maintenance records. Improperly maintained systems could affect water quality. There are many types of household water treatment systems, including softeners, filters and reverse osmosis systems.



### SEPTIC TANK AND DRAIN FIELD CONDITION

The septic system should be inspected to ensure it is in good working order. An improperly maintained and/or leaking septic system could contaminate the well and adversely affect your drinking water quality.



STATE HYGIENIC LABORATORY  
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA

*Iowa's Environmental and Public Health Laboratory*

SHL.UIOWA.EDU



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## TEST THE WATER

Contaminants may be colorless, odorless or tasteless. Testing the water is the only way to know if it is safe. Contact SHL for guidance.

- Test **Annually** for Total coliform bacteria plus *E.coli* and nitrate
- Test **Every 5 Years** for Arsenic
- Test if changes occur in the taste, odor or color of water
- Test if there have been nearby contamination sources (flooding, leaking septic tank, agriculture, etc.)
- Test if experiencing illness associated with water, such as diarrhea

## PREVENT CONTAMINATION

- Keep chemicals and fuels far away from the well
- Maintain the septic system (if applicable)
- Place secondary containers around chemicals to catch leaks
- Do not connect hoses directly from faucet into chemical containers

## MAINTAIN THE WELL

Have a certified well professional:

- Inspect the well annually
- Conduct routine maintenance
- Make needed repairs

## VISUALLY INSPECT THE WELL

Check the wellhead several times a year for:

- structural damage
- tightly sealed well cap

If the well is in a pit, contact a professional for an inspection.

## RESPOND TO CONTAMINATION

If unsafe contaminants have been found:

- Do Not drink the water
- Contact your county health department for evaluation and guidance
- Next steps may include additional sampling, disinfection and/or treatment
  - Retest to make sure water is safe

**Ongoing protection of your water**

## Important Contacts

State Hygienic Lab (SHL) 800-421-IOWA County Health Department \_\_\_\_\_

Well Contractor \_\_\_\_\_ Treatment Systems \_\_\_\_\_

Unlike municipal water systems, well water is not monitored or regulated by local, state or federal agencies. It is the responsibility of homeowners with private wells to maintain and monitor the well and water quality. Some water tests may be available for free. Contact the State Hygienic Laboratory or your county health department for details.

SHL.UIOWA.EDU

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