

testing might be warranted if your water has elevated nitrite/nitrate concentrations or significant amounts of pesticide have been applied near the well. These less-routine tests may not be performed at all state certified laboratories.

## When To Test

DEP recommends that prospective homebuyers test the water in a home with a private well before purchase. Water quality in wells is generally stable, and if a change is going to occur, it occurs slowly. Thus the interval between water quality tests, once you've purchased the home, can generally be in terms of years (see chart) if a well is properly constructed and located in a safe area.

However, the following conditions would prompt more frequent testing:

- Heavily developed areas with land uses that handle hazardous chemicals.
- Recent well construction activities or repairs. DEP recommends taking a bacterial test after any well repair or pump or plumbing modification, but only after disinfection and substantial flushing of the water system.
- Contaminant concentrations above state or federal standards found in earlier testing.
- Noticeable variations in quality like a water quality change after a heavy rain, extended drought, or an unexplained change in a previously trouble-free well (i.e. funny taste, cloudy appearance, etc.).

When taking any sample, DEP recommends that it be taken after a heavy rainstorm. These events tend to highlight conditions of improper well construction or poor soil filtration.

## What the Tests Tell You

Results will reveal the level at which any of the tested substances were found in your water sample. The mere presence of these contaminants in well water does not necessarily imply that there is a problem. However, when levels exceed state or federal health standards, you should take steps to correct the situation. Several methods are available from commercial contractors to treat contaminated water.

## For More Information

As private wells in Massachusetts are regulated at the local level, you should first contact your local Board of Health for your town's private well testing requirements. For more information about private wells including additional water quality testing recommendations, you should refer to the *DEP Private Well Guidelines*, which are available on the Drinking Water Program's Publication web page. Other information such as the listing of state certified laboratories can also be accessed through the web page.

For additional assistance contact the DEP Drinking Water Program at:

Massachusetts Department of  
Environmental Protection Drinking Water Program  
1 Winter Street, 6<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Boston, MA 02108  
phone: 617-292-5770

[www.mass.gov/dep](http://www.mass.gov/dep)

# Protect Your Family

## Test Your Well's Water Quality Today



### A Guide to Water Quality Testing for Private Wells in Massachusetts

 EPA United States Environmental Protection Agency New England

MAHB



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