

Buffalo County Health Department offers drinking water testing for bacteria, nitrates, and arsenic.

How do I get a test kit?

You may:

- ◇ Stop into the Buffalo County Health Department, on the third floor of the Buffalo County Courthouse Monday through Friday 8am 4:30pm
- ◇ Call and request a kit be mailed
- ◇ Email at: dhhs@co.buffalo.wi.us and request a kit

When Should I test my well?

- ◇ Annually
- ◇ After any work on or modification to the well (e.g. pump replacement)
- ◇ Any time the well water changes in taste, odor, color or appearance.

Buffalo County Health Department

Prevent. Promote. Protect.



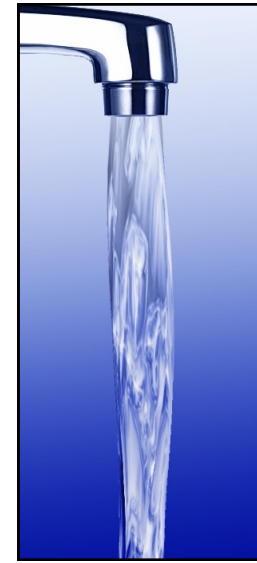
Buffalo County Health Department
407 South Second Street
P.O. Box 517
Alma WI 54610-0517

Telephone: (608) 685-4412

Fax: (608) 685-3342

Email: dhhs@co.buffalo.wi.us

www.buffalocounty.com/331/Public-Health



Buffalo County Water Lab



What should I Test For?

Arsenic

What is Arsenic?

Arsenic is a natural element found in soil and bedrock throughout Wisconsin. High levels of arsenic can negatively affect your health.

How can Arsenic affect your Health?

- ◇ Skin changes including patches of darkened skin, appearance of small warts on palms & soles of feet
- ◇ Skin cancer
- ◇ Increased risk for liver, bladder, and lung cancer
- ◇ Tremors, headaches, and numbness



What level of Arsenic is Safe?

The federal drinking water standard for arsenic is 10 parts per billion (ppb). If your arsenic level is over 10 ppb, it is recommended that you stop using your water for drinking or food preparation until the level has been decreased.

How do I decrease the amount of Arsenic in my Water?

-Install a treatment system

Bacteria

What are Coliform Bacteria?

Coliform bacteria are the most common contaminants found in private water systems, and don't generally cause illness, but indicate a breach in the water system.

Where do Coliform bacteria live?

-In soil -On vegetation -In surface water

What is E. Coli?

E. Coli are a form of coliform bacteria found in the intestines of warm-blooded animals and their feces. They are usually filtered out as the water seeps through the soil, but sometimes they enter the water supply and can cause illness if consumed.

How does bacteria enter my well?

- ◇ carried into well casings by insects
- ◇ washed into the ground by rainwater or snowmelt
- ◇ cracks in well casings
- ◇ poorly sealed well caps
- ◇ fractures in the underlying bedrock
- ◇ runoff into sinkholes

The bacteria test is one of the most important tests you should have done on your well water.



Nitrates

How do Nitrates form?

Nitrates form when nitrogen combine with oxygenated water

What are the

Sources?

- ◇ fertilizers
- ◇ animal wastes
- ◇ septic systems
- ◇ decaying plants
- ◇ municipal sewage sludge

Who is at risk?

- ◇ infants under six months of age
- ◇ pregnant Women
- ◇ breastfeeding Women
- ◇ anybody with long term exposure to elevated nitrate levels

Nitrate exposure can cause a serious condition called methemoglobinemia or "blue-baby syndrome" caused by a lack of oxygen in the blood. Infants with this condition need immediate medical attention. Nitrates taken in by pregnant women may reduce the amount of oxygen available to the growing fetus. Everyone should have their water tested for nitrates at least once. If you live in an area within 1/4 mile of a farm field, you should test your water for nitrates regularly.

