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sécurité... notre priorité.*

Canada

# Individual wells

## for First Nations



Bacteriological  
and chemical  
testing of your  
well water

A step-by-step  
checklist



Health Canada (HC) recognizes the importance of monitoring drinking water quality in all First Nations water systems, including small systems. If you are served by a well with fewer than five connections, free sampling and testing services are available on request. HC has developed this brochure providing step-by-step instructions for bacteriological and chemical sampling and testing services for your well water.

## Testing your well water

### *Bacteriological tests*

- ❑ Contact your Environmental Health Officer (EHO) or Community-Based Water Quality Monitor (CBWM) to arrange bacteriological testing of your water.

### *Test frequency*

Two or three times a year or any time there is a concern as to the safety of the water supply, for example:

- once just after the spring thaw;
- after an extended dry spell, following heavy rains or after lengthy periods of non-use;
- after major plumbing work;
- right away if there is any change in water clarity, colour, odour or taste;
- right away if there has been any change or development of the surrounding land;
- as soon as possible if there is any doubt about the safety of the water supply.

Samples are tested onsite by the EHO or CBWM for the following bacteriological parameters:

- **Total coliforms** – These are bacteria that are present in animal waste and sewage, and are also found in soil and vegetation. If they are found in your water, it may mean that surface water is getting into the well.
- ***Escherichia coli* or *E. coli*** – These are bacteria found only in the digestive systems of humans and animals. If they are present in the water, it is usually due to contamination by animal or human waste from a nearby source.

Testing water regularly will verify that the water supply is safe. This is an important way to protect the health and safety of everyone who uses the water.

### *Chemical tests*

- ❑ Contact your EHO to arrange chemical testing of your water.

### *Test frequency*

Any time it is suspected that chemicals may have leaked into the well or at least once every five years.



Chemical testing of your water does not have to be done as often as bacteriological testing because the risk of chemical contamination is lower.

Chemical testing is done in accordance with the latest edition of the Health Canada *Guidelines for Canadian Drinking Water Quality* (GCDWQ)

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## The results (bacteriological and chemical)

If water tests show that the quality of water is satisfactory, the test results will be mailed to you. The information you receive will include the test results and information on acceptable quality levels according to the latest Health Canada Guidelines for Canadian Drinking Water Quality. If the results from either a chemical or bacteriological test show that there is a problem with the water, you will be contacted by your EHO or CBWM about further testing and/or recommendations.



### REMEMBER:

**Never** use or store pesticides, herbicides, or fertilizers around your well.

**Never** place livestock pens, stables, or dog kennels nearby.

**Never** store fuel or machinery that may leak fuel, oil, or other chemicals near the well.

**Always** inspect storage tanks that hold heating oil, diesel, or gasoline.

## **For More Information**

Contact your Community Health Centre to obtain contact information for your Environmental Health Officer (EHO) or Community-Based Drinking Water Quality Monitor (CBWM).

