

Disinfecting Small Amounts of Well Water for Drinking

Water from newly constructed wells, repaired wells, and wells which have been flooded or submerged and wells that tested positive for coliform bacteria should be considered contaminated. Water from such sources should not be used for drinking and domestic purposes until proven safe by bacteriological and nitrate tests. If such a supply is not available, it is possible to use water from the contaminated well if the precautions listed below are carefully followed:

1. Pump out well until the water is clear and clean.
2. Either boil* or disinfect with chlorine.
 - *Boil the water for 2 minutes to make it safe. To remove the “flat” taste from boiled water, cool; and then pour it back and forth between two clean receptacles several times to permit the water to pick up carbon dioxide from the air.

(Please note, boiling to disinfect water will increase the concentration of nitrates and nitrites in water; therefore, it is recommended you use a different method if you choose to disinfect water which also contains nitrates and nitrites. Public Health, Delta and Menominee Counties, recommends having your water tested for nitrates/nitrites in addition to coliform bacteria. Sample bottles are available at the Delta County Health Department, Menominee County Health Department, and the Stephenson Annex.)
 - A simple and easy alternative method for making water safe for drinking is to disinfect it with chlorine. Add 3 drops of any of the common unscented liquid laundry bleaches, such as Clorox, Roman Cleanser, etc. (active ingredient 5 1/4%), to each gallon of clear well water, mix, and let stand for 30 minutes before using.
3. Continue these precautionary measures until the well water is proven safe by laboratory tests.