

Well-Water Safety Overview – March 10, 2019

The following information is from the Oregon State University Well Water Program:
<http://wellwater.oregonstate.edu/> (Slow website!)

Well-water safety issues include:

- **Coliform Bacteria.** Coliform bacteria don't usually cause illness, but they serve as an indicator that disease-causing organisms can get into your well.
- **Nitrate.** Nitrate leaches very easily through the soil to groundwater from farms, gardens, septic systems, animals and manures Nitrate is also an indicator that other surface contaminants have the potential to leach into your drinking water.
- **Arsenic.** Some areas of the Willamette Valley have problems with arsenic presence in well water. It does not leach into groundwater from surface sources, but can be present due to local soil mineral content. If not found from initial testing, it does not require testing again.

The OSU Well-Water Program suggests the following:

-Test for coliform bacteria:

- At least once a year
- Whenever you notice a change in taste or color of the water
- After work on the well
- If you notice the cap is not secure
- If you notice surface water standing around the base of the well head
- When you purchase a new home with a well (required by Oregon law)

-Test for nitrate:

- If you expect to have a pregnant woman or newborn baby drink the water
- Once a year if you live near:
 - Fertilized fields, pastures or pens with animals/livestock, or a septic system
- If you have had a nitrate level in the past - then test once a year, and keep records
- Recognize that nitrate levels vary depending on the time of year and the weather conditions

OSU Well-Water Program Assessment Tools:

Tools are available to determine the risk of well-water contamination at specific wells, as well as actions well owners can take to avoid well-water contamination:

<http://wellwater.engr.oregonstate.edu/assessment-tools> (Slow website!)

> Contact the OSU Benton County Extension Office, 541-766-6750, for additional information and publications on water quality.

Well-Water Testing:

> Free nitrate screening is available at the OSU Benton County Extension Office:
4077 SW Research Way, Corvallis, M-F, 8-5. (Take 1/2 cup of untreated well water in a clean container labeled with your identity. Be prepared to leave the sample.)

> Commercial testing for coliform bacteria, nitrate, arsenic and other well-water contaminants is available at the following Corvallis testing lab, which has accreditation through the Oregon Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Program:

Edge Analytical, Inc., 540 SW 3rd St. Corvallis, OR 97333, 541-753-4946.

Oregon State Water Resource Department - Well Log Database:

Information pertaining to private wells is kept with the State Water Resources Department (WRD). These records can be accessed online by viewing the [Oregon Well Log Database](#) or by contacting the Water Resources Department, Salem Office: 503-986-0900. If you use the database, click on "Help" to get some guidance.