

Arsenic in well water: What you should know

Arsenic is a naturally occurring element found in the earth's crust. It has no color, smell or taste. As water flows through certain rock formations, arsenic can dissolve and be carried into underground aquifers and your well water. Arsenic is a health hazard.

Arsenic and your health

Long-term consumption of water with arsenic above the drinking water standard may increase the risk of health problems of the skin, circulatory system, nervous system, lungs and bladder. These health problems include some forms of cancer.

Arsenic and your well water

The only way to know if you have arsenic in your well water is to test. Contact an accredited laboratory for specific instructions on how to collect, store and send the sample. The test will cost between \$30–\$45. To find accredited labs in Oregon, visit www.healthoregon.org/wells.

Arsenic is measured in parts per billion (ppb). It can also be measured in milligrams per liter (mg/L). For example, 10 ppb is the same as 0.010 mg/L. The safe drinking water standard (also called maximum contaminant level or MCL) for arsenic is 10 ppb. If your water has arsenic levels above 10 ppb (0.010 mg/L), you should switch to bottled water or another source of safe drinking water and seek treatment options.

Interpreting your arsenic results

Arsenic result	Water use	Recommendations
10 ppb or less (0.010 mg/L or less)	SAFE for drinking, cooking and all other domestic uses.	Test water once every three years
Between 10 and 99 ppb (0.010 and 0.090 mg/L)	NOT SAFE for drinking, mixing into beverages, cooking or washing fruits and vegetables. NOT SAFE for pets to drink. SAFE for all other domestic uses, including bathing, washing dishes, doing laundry or irrigating gardens.	Do not boil water. Use bottled water (or approved water filtration system) for drinking, cooking and washing fruits and vegetables. Use bottled water for pets. Supervise children to help them avoid swallowing water while bathing, brushing teeth, etc.
Between 100 and 499 ppb (0.100 and 0.499 mg/L)	Same restrictions as above. NOT SAFE for irrigating gardens. SAFE for all other domestic uses.	If you have a treatment system, test treated water at least once a year. Test untreated water (pre-treatment unit) at least every three years.
500 ppb and higher (0.500 mg/L and higher)	NOT SAFE for any domestic uses.	Contact your local drinking water specialist.



You should test for arsenic at least once in well's lifetime.

For more information:

- Private well owners with health-related questions about arsenic in their water, well maintenance and testing recommendations, call 971-673-0977 or email domestic.wells@state.or.us.
- For questions about treatment options for your domestic well, contact the drinking water specialist at [your local health department](#) (<http://tinyurl.com/DWcontacts>).

This document can be provided upon request in an alternate format for individuals with disabilities or in a language other than English for people with limited English skills. To request this publication in another format or language, contact the Domestic Well Safety Program at 971-673-0977 or 711 for TTY.

