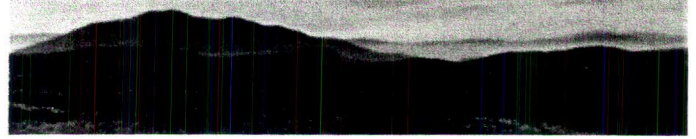




Department of Health
Agency of Human Services



Drinking Water Disinfection

My water is contaminated. Why hasn't it made me sick?

Coliform or other bacteria will not necessarily make you ill. However, since these organisms have been able to enter your water system other disease-causing organisms (bacteria, viruses, and protozoa) could enter as well. To prevent illness, we advise that you boil your water for one minute before drinking.

Can water tests pinpoint the exact source of contamination?

No. Water tests show that coliform bacteria have entered your water system, either at the source or between the source and the faucet. The tests don't identify the source.

What should I do if my drinking water is contaminated?

Boil for one minute all water used for drinking; making ice, juice or baby formula; and for washing fruits and vegetables. Look at the location and construction of your water source and try to identify and eliminate the source of contamination.

Location

Wells and springs should be isolated, preferably uphill from septic systems and other potential contamination sources, such as barnyards and pastures.

Construction:

Dug wells and springs should be made of concrete and have tight-fitting, lipped covers and sealed joints. Drilled wells should have casings that extend 18 inches above ground, surrounded by mounded clay to prevent surface water from entering.

I disinfected my well and consulted with the Health Department, but my water is still contaminated. What should I do now?

You may need to hire an environmental engineer or hydrogeologist to find the problem. Lists of water system consultants and water treatment options are available from the Department of Health.

How To Disinfect Your Water System

Use a chlorine bleach solution to disinfect your water supply after construction or repair work (including replacing the pump), or when a water test shows contamination.

Before you begin, disconnect or remove any water treatment devices, such as activated carbon filters, water softeners or reverse osmosis units. Highly chlorinated water can make them less effective or even damage them.

For a dug or drilled well, add one gallon of household laundry bleach for every 525 gallons of water. This means using one gallon of bleach for every 10 feet of 36-inch-diameter dug well or every 350 feet of 6-inch-diameter drilled well.

