



# KEEPING YOUR PRIVATE WELL WATER SAFE

## Where does my drinking water come from?

There are two main sources of drinking water in Iowa.

**Public water supplies** include city water utilities and rural water supplies that are regulated to maintain specific water quality standards.

**Private wells** can generally be thought of as drinking water sources that serve fewer than 25 individuals per day. About 7% of Iowans, or 230,000 individuals, rely on private wells. It is the responsibility of private well owners to maintain the well's water quality, including annual testing for pollutants.

## Why should I test my well annually?

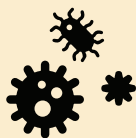
There are many reasons to test your well! It all boils down to knowing what you are drinking.



Testing your water annually will help keep you, your family, pets, livestock and others safe.



Some pollutants are odorless and tasteless and will not be removed by boiling water.



Pollutants like bacteria, arsenic and nitrate are found at elevated levels in 10-30% of private wells in Iowa. (Iowa Department of Public Health)



Iowa has a unique program that allows for free or low-cost annual testing of private wells.

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## Understanding your private well's water quality

There are many different factors that contribute to the quality of your well's water such as well construction, geographic setting and land use in your watershed.

Wells that were constructed before 1982 often have fewer protective construction features and well owners may lack documentation about the construction.

No matter when or how your well was constructed, well water quality can change over time. **The best way to make sure that your well water is safe is to test annually.**

## Testing your well

All counties in Iowa participate in a program called Grants-to-Counties that allows for free or low cost annual testing for private wells. In order to access the program, contact your county department of environmental health and they will send a county employee to take your sample for you.

These county employees are called Environmental Health Specialists or Sanitarians, and are a knowledgeable resource for private well owners. Sanitarians are trained to take an accurate water sample and to help you interpret your results.

**#1 Responsibility of a  
Private Well Owner:  
Test your well water  
once per year**



**Call your  
local county  
sanitarian**



**Arrange a time  
for sampling**



**The county  
collects your  
sample**



**Receive your  
results**



## Would you like to learn more about protecting your well's water quality?

**The Private Well Stewardship Program** is an educational program offered through Iowa State University Extension and Outreach in which private well owners learn about the responsibilities and risks of being a private well owner and are connected to additional resources to manage their well.

This program is designed for busy Iowans, consisting of two one-hour sessions, with the goal of assisting you in safeguarding your drinking water.

## Interested in taking part in the Private Well Stewardship Program?

Contact your county ISU Extension and Outreach office and ask if they are offering the Private Well Stewardship Program in your area. Or, you can contact Catherine DeLong (crdelong@iastate.edu, 515-294-5963), water quality program manager at ISU Extension and Outreach, who leads the program.