

Why Annual Well Water Testing is Essential in Manitoba

For many rural Manitobans, a private well is the primary source of drinking water. While groundwater is often clean and reliable, it is not automatically safe. Unlike municipal water systems, private wells are not routinely monitored by government agencies—meaning the responsibility for ensuring safe drinking water falls entirely on the landowner.

You Can't See What's in Your Water

One of the biggest risks with well water is that contamination is often invisible. Harmful bacteria, nitrates, and other contaminants typically have **no taste, smell, or colour**. Water may appear perfectly clean but still pose serious health risks to you and your family.

Bacteria Can Enter Your Well at Any Time

Well water can become contaminated by bacteria such as coliforms and *E. coli*, which often come from human or animal waste.

In Manitoba, contamination is especially likely:

- After spring snowmelt
- Following heavy rainfall or flooding
- If a well is older or improperly sealed

For this reason, Manitoba health guidelines recommend testing private wells **at least once every year**, ideally in the spring.

Nitrates and Other Contaminants Pose Serious Health Risks

Nitrates—commonly from fertilizers, manure, or septic systems—can seep into groundwater. High levels are particularly dangerous for infants, potentially causing “blue baby syndrome,” which reduces the blood’s ability to carry oxygen.

Other contaminants that may be present in well water include:

- Bacteria and viruses
- Parasites
- Chemicals from agriculture or industry

Regular testing helps identify these risks before they impact your health.

Water Quality Can Change Over Time

Even if your well has tested safe in the past, conditions can change. Factors like weather, nearby land use, and aging well infrastructure can all affect water quality.

Manitoba experts emphasize that **wells located close to each other can have completely different water quality**, so you cannot rely on a neighbour's test results.

Early Detection Saves Time, Money, and Health

Routine testing allows you to:

- Catch contamination early
- Take corrective action (such as disinfecting the well)
- Avoid costly repairs or health issues down the road

If contamination is found, steps like chlorination, filtration, or well repairs can restore safe drinking water.

It's Your Responsibility

In Manitoba, private well owners are responsible for testing and maintaining their own water supply.

Regular testing isn't just a recommendation—it's a critical part of protecting your household.

Bottom Line

Testing your well water annually is a simple, affordable way to ensure your drinking water is safe. Because contamination can happen without warning and cannot be detected by sight, smell, or taste, regular testing is the only reliable way to protect your health and your family.

The Redboine Watershed District, Pembina Valley Watershed District and the Central Assiniboine Watershed District is offering a well testing program on **Wednesday, June 10th and Wednesday, June 24th**. Landowners can pick-up testing supplies and drop-off samples at various locations within the districts (see the advertisements for more details). The Watershed Districts then takes care of getting the samples into the lab in Winnipeg at no additional cost to the landowner.