



HOUSING & ENVIRONMENT

THE UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA
COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE
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TESTING FOR WATER QUALITY

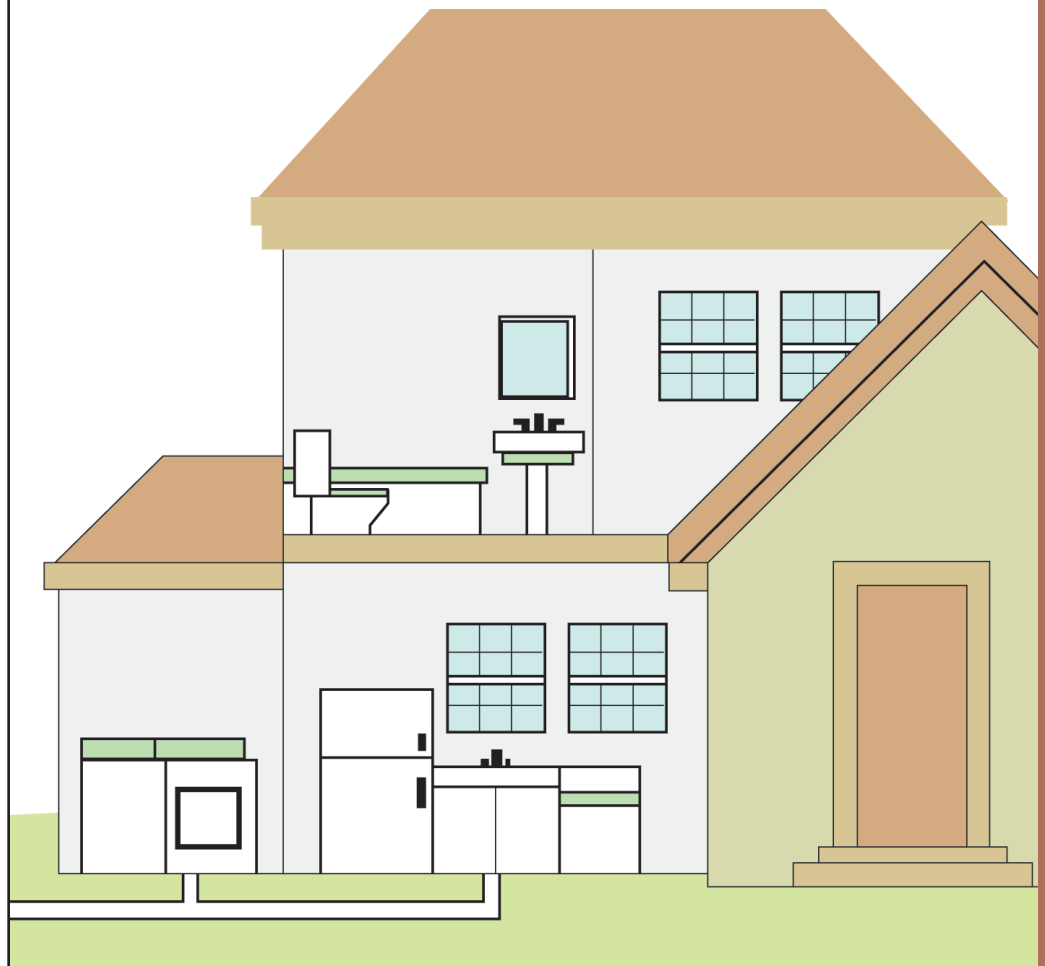
Water quality is of great importance to many Americans today. Because of an increased interest in health, coupled with new information about our environment, the quality of our water receives a great amount of attention. This new focus on water quality has led many Americans to consider having their water tested.

SHOULD I HAVE MY WATER TESTED?

It is not necessary for everyone to have their water tested. Public and municipal water supplies are routinely tested and must meet standards established by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA); therefore, these sources usually do not need to be tested unless inhouse contamination is suspected. However, water testing should be considered if:

- your family or houseguests regularly complain of gastrointestinal ailments.
- you are concerned about the presence of lead pipes or soldering in your home.
- your water or pipes show signs of deterioration (these signs include water with a strange color, odor, taste, or consistency; pipes that are corroded or leaking).
- you are buying a new home with a well.
- your water stains plumbing fixtures and laundry.
- your source of water is a well, spring, or cistern.

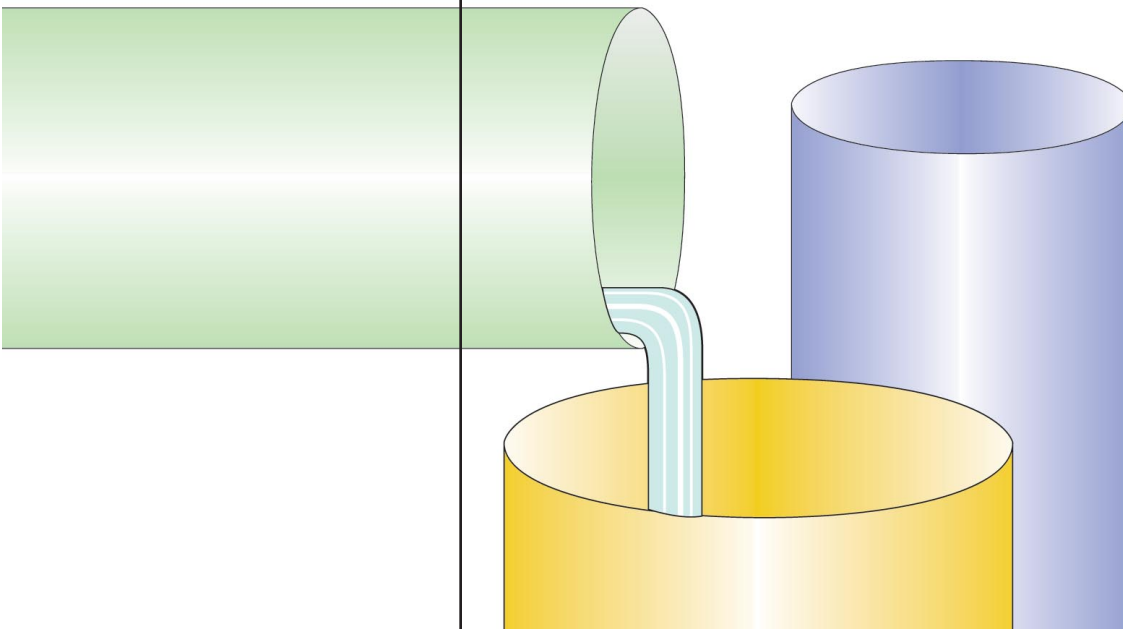
Remember, whereas public water supplies are routinely tested and treated, only YOU are responsible for the safety of your well water. Poor water quality has an effect on not only your drinking water, but on water used in a variety of household functions. Contaminated water used for cooking may affect your health, while an excess of certain minerals can hamper cleaning activities in your laundry or bathroom.



TYPES OF WATER QUALITY TESTS

Unfortunately, no single test can provide you with information on all possible contaminants. However, specific questions about water quality can often be answered with the right test.

- **Bacteriological Tests** can tell you if your water is free of disease-causing bacteria, but there are many types of tests that cover a variety of bacteria. The most common bacteriological test checks for the presence of total coliform bacteria, which can result from fecal contamination.
- **Mineral Tests** can determine if the mineral content of your water is high enough to affect either health or the aesthetic and cleaning capacities of your water. The mineral test often includes calcium, magnesium, manganese, iron, copper, and zinc. An abundance of these minerals can cause hard water, plumbing and laundry stains, or bad odors.
- **Pesticide and Chemical Tests** are generally performed only if there is reason to believe a specific contaminant has infiltrated the water system (such as pesticides entering the water supply of a rural home). Industrial and petroleum contamination can also be found through chemical testing.



To have your water tested, call your local county extension office or check with your municipal water supplier or county health department to find a certified private laboratory near you.

Source:

"Testing for Water Quality," University of Georgia Cooperative Extension Service.

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