



**Public Health**  
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## La Crosse County Health Department

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# WATER QUALITY HEALTH ADVISORY FOR PRIVATE WELLS

RESIDENT  
ADDRESS 1  
ADDRESS 2

Date: March 31, 2017

Yog muaj lus nug dabtsi hu tau: (608)785-9872

Para informacion en espanol llame: (608)785-9872

### Dear Resident,

The La Crosse County Health Department has identified that some private wells located mostly in the western half of the Towns of Holland and Onalaska have elevated levels of nitrates and/or bacteria in their drinking water. You are receiving this letter because you live in an area identified to be at risk, and testing for both nitrates and bacteria is recommended.

### Why are nitrates a concern?

#### For infants less than 1 year of age and women who are pregnant or may become pregnant:

Nitrate levels higher than 10 mcg/mL (same as 10 ppm) exceed state and federal standards for nitrates in public drinking water supplies. Infants less than 1 year of age or females who are pregnant or may become pregnant should not consume water that exceeds this standard. Infants less than 1 year of age who drink this water (including in formula) may experience nitrate poisoning, which requires timely medical attention. Levels greater than 10 mcg/mL may also cause birth defects in the first weeks of pregnancy. Please contact your health care provider if you have questions or concerns.

**Testing for nitrates:** Recommended as soon as possible if you have not had your well water tested in the past 12 months.

**If the safety of your water is unknown:** use bottled water or water obtained from a municipal water source such as a village or city for drinking and cooking until you know your well water is safe.

#### For all persons:

The Department of Health Services recommends that all people avoid long-term consumption of water that has a nitrate level greater than 10 mcg/mL. Some researchers suspect there may be an increased risk of thyroid disease, diabetes, and certain types of cancer.

**Testing for nitrates:** Recommended annually.

### Why is bacteria a concern?

#### For all persons:

The presence of bacteria, especially E.coli, can cause nausea, vomiting, fever and diarrhea; symptoms can be severe. Some bacteria do not cause illness in healthy individuals, but their presence in well water indicates your system is at risk for more serious forms of contamination.

**Testing for bacteria:** Recommended annually and as soon as possible if you are experiencing nausea, vomiting, fever and diarrhea right now.

## **Where to get your water tested:**

### **La Crosse County Health Department:**

**Pick up a well water testing kit:** At the Health Department Monday through Friday 8:00 am – 4:30 pm, or check with your local Village/Town Hall or Library.

**Nitrate testing:** \$26.

**Bacteria testing** (including coliform and E.coli): \$26.

**Due to increased risk:** If your home has an infant less than 1 year of age or a woman who is pregnant, bring this letter with your water sample to the Health Department before May 31, 2017 for reduced nitrate and bacteria testing fees.

**Drop off samples:** At the Health Department Monday through Thursday, 8:00 am – 4:00 pm.

### **Test results:**

**If your test results for nitrates are greater than 10 mcg/mL or positive for bacteria:** You will receive a phone call or email within 1-2 business days of your sample being submitted, and a letter with your results within 2-4 business days.

**If your test results are within normal limits:** A letter with your results will be sent within 2 to 4 business days.

**Testing is also available at:** Davy Laboratories in La Crosse (608-782-3130), WI State Lab of Hygiene (800-442-4618), UW-Stevens Point (715-346-3209), and Eau Claire City-County Health Department (715-839-4718). Prices vary.

## **What do I do if my well water test has a high level of nitrates (higher than 10mcg/mL) or is positive for bacteria?**

### **Nitrates higher than 10mcg/mL result:**

If your nitrate levels are higher than 10 mcg/mL, it is recommended that you use bottled water for drinking and cooking, especially if you are pregnant or may become pregnant, or if you have an infant aged 1 year or less in the home (includes infant formula). You can install a treatment system (such as a Reverse Osmosis System) to help remove nitrates from your water. Drilling a new or deeper well can also help resolve the issue.

### **Bacteria positive results:**

If bacterial contamination is suspected, boiling water for at least 5 minutes before drinking or using water for cooking will help kill the bacteria. Boiling increases the nitrates so use of bottled water is recommended if the nitrates are also high. Chlorination of the well will be needed to remove the bacteria from the well. This can be performed by the home owner or by a licensed well driller, pump installer, or plumber. Your well will need to be retested to determine that the bacteria has been removed.

## **Where can I get more information?**

To view a map of the affected areas, see the following link from UW Extension, UW Stevens Point Groundwater Center's Groundwater Quality Viewer: [https://gissrv2.uwsp.edu/cnr/gwc/pw\\_web/](https://gissrv2.uwsp.edu/cnr/gwc/pw_web/).

Bacteriological Contamination of Drinking Water Wells: <http://dnr.wi.gov/files/PDF/pubs/DG/DG0003.pdf>

Nitrate in Groundwater: <http://aqua.wisc.edu/publications/pdfs/nitratefactsheet.pdf>

Tests for Drinking Water from Private Wells: <http://dnr.wi.gov/regulations/labcert/documents/testsforwell.pdf>

## **Who to call with questions?**

If you have questions about this Health Advisory, please call: La Crosse County Health Department at (608) 785-9872, Monday through Friday, 8:00 am – 4:30 pm.