

Other recommended actions for private wells

The Office of Environmental Health recommends that all private wells be tested at least once per year for bacteria and nitrate contamination from septic systems.



Who can I call to talk about my test results or to get more information?

Arizona Department of Health Services,
Office of Environmental Health

Phoenix Area: (602) 364-3118

Toll Free: (800) 367-6412

Office of Environmental Health

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This publication can be made available in alternative format. Please call the number listed above.

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What you should know about Arsenic in the groundwater



Arizona Department of Health Services



What is Arsenic?

Arsenic is a naturally occurring metal in soils. Eating foods or drinking water with too much arsenic can cause health problems.

In Arizona, arsenic is present in almost all groundwater supplies. Because private wells are the primary source of water for rural residents of Arizona, making sure the water is free of arsenic is important.

The Office of Environmental Health (OEH) recommends testing all new wells for arsenic and other primary metals before the water is used for drinking or cooking purposes.

How much arsenic is too much arsenic?

Arizona Department of Health Services (ADHS) has developed a simple method to determine if the arsenic levels are too high, using a color code. In the following text, ppb is parts per billion and mg/L is milligrams per liter.

Green: Less than 10 ppb or 0.01 mg/L
It is OK to drink and cook with this water.

Yellow: 11–200 ppb or 0.011–0.2 mg/L
Consumption of water containing arsenic in this range will increase the risk of long term or chronic health problems. The higher the level the greater the risk. Don't panic! Remember, chronic conditions develop over a long time. Make plans to obtain water from another source, or install and maintain treatment.

Red: Above 200 ppb or 0.2 mg/L
This water should NOT be used for drinking or cooking! This level is a cause for concern and it is strongly suggested that you obtain your drinking water from another source immediately that is known to have no detectable arsenic, or install and maintain a home treatment device. Water with 500 ppb of arsenic or less can be used for bathing, laundry, and brushing teeth. Children should not use this water for brushing their teeth.

How can arsenic be removed from the water?

Arsenic can be removed from the water by several methods, but the most common method for household use is by a reverse osmosis filtration system.

Can arsenic be removed by boiling the water?

Arsenic is a metal, and cannot be removed by boiling the water before use. In fact, boiling the water may increase the concentration of arsenic.

How can arsenic hurt me or my family?

Arsenic in small amounts, taken over many years, can cause certain cancers. Skin cancer is the most common. At high levels arsenic can cause poisoning, which may result in acute illness and even death.

Why is this information being made available?

Information on arsenic exposure around Arizona has been available for several years. It is only recently that people have begun moving into areas where high arsenic levels may affect large numbers of people. Because of these new trends, the ADHS is providing more detailed information to the public on how to protect themselves.