

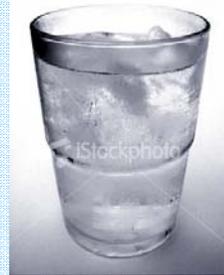
Healthy Homes: booklet series

Water Quality

Identify the Problem:

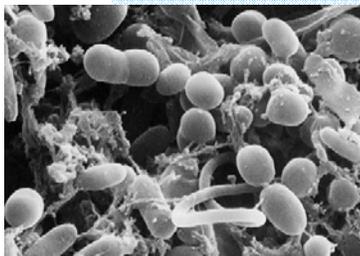
We all use water in our daily lives, for many different things. For the most part, public and municipal water in this country is very safe and healthy. If you have well water, or another private supply, it may be up to you to determine its purity.

There are four categories of contaminants that could be in your water, without you realizing it.



Bacteria & Viruses

On rare occasions, bacteria and viruses can make their way into the water supply and cause various diseases. Most commonly, these water-borne organisms can cause upset stomach, nausea, vomiting or diarrhea.

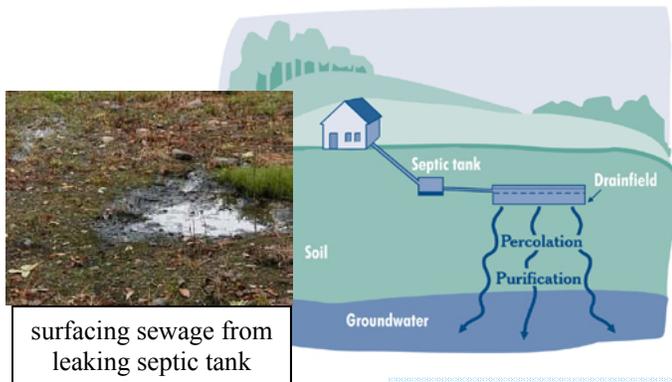


These unexpected outbreaks can be more dangerous to children, pregnant women, senior and those already ill.

Nitrate

Although nitrate can enter water supplies through fertilizers from farm run-off, occasionally the source is from animal or human waste (which means the potential for bacteria as well).

The ingestion of nitrate from any source can be harmful to humans, especially children.



“Blue Baby Syndrome” is a result of nitrate exposure, and it can prevent a child from getting oxygen into the blood stream.

This syndrome is extremely dangerous and can be fatal; a baby or child who is turning blue or purple should get medical attention immediately.

If you are on a private well and have an infant or are pregnant, have your water tested for nitrate prior to drinking it.

Metals: Lead & Copper

Lead and copper are metals that wouldn't be in the water supply itself, but could be carried into your water through metal plumbing or your faucets.

Copper can cause colic and vomiting for babies. Lead is extremely dangerous, especially for children, as it can cause brain damage, learning disabilities, and a large variety of other neurological problems.



If you think you're at risk for metals because of your water pipes, run your tap water for a few minutes, until it is as cold as it will get. This will flush the pipes of any metals that have collected in the water during lack of use.

It is also recommended that you have your tap water tested by a certified laboratory. If a problem is found, replacing old plumbing may be necessary.

Pesticides & Other Chemicals

Occasionally, strong chemicals can enter the water supply through ground water sources. Often this is in the form of pesticides that were used either on farms or on lawns.

Pesticides can lead to neurological problems if consumed by humans, and the first signs are dizziness, nausea, headache or vomiting.



Sometimes, fuel oil or gasoline caused by spills or leaks also permeate through the ground and into water supplies. Even small amounts of these chemicals can be highly toxic to human beings, and can cause cancer, liver or kidney damage.



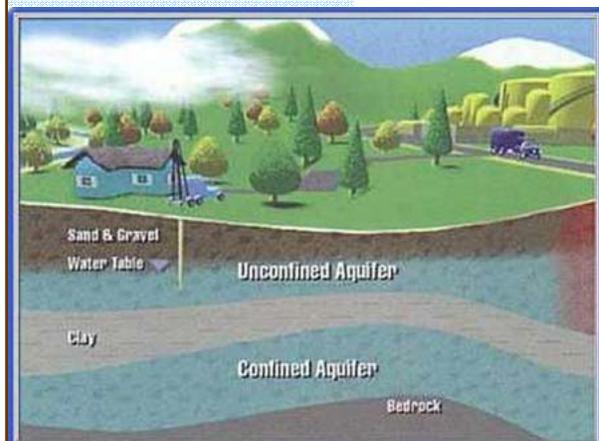
a leaking underground storage tank

Taking Action: City Water & Private Wells

Question: Does my home receive city water or do I have private well water?

Answer: If you receive a monthly bill from the Water Utility Authority, you receive city water. If not, your water comes from a private well.

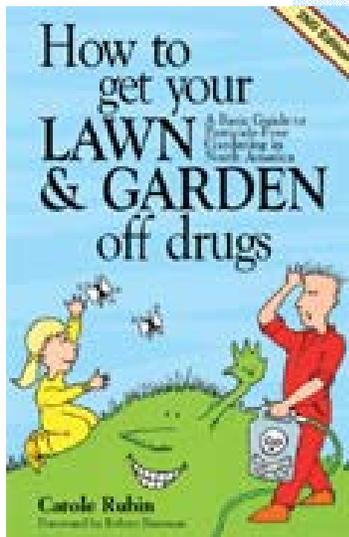
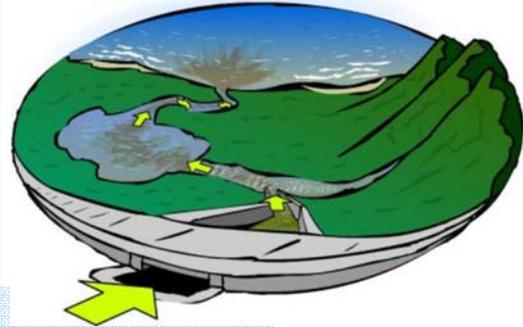
- The Albuquerque Bernalillo County Water Utility Authority tests its water supply for dozens of chemicals and compounds.
- As 100% of our drinking water comes from ground water, it is vital that we keep our ground water clean.
- If your water comes from a private well, it is your responsibility to test the water for any potential contaminants.



Taking Action (continued)

- Do not dump automotive chemicals (motor oil, antifreeze, power steering or transmission fluid) or any harsh chemicals down the drain or into the sewer or into the garbage.
- Make sure these items are recycled properly. Contact Rinchem at 345-3655.
- Reduce or avoid using pesticides or weed killers on your lawns and gardens.

Where Storm Water Goes After the Curb Inlet



- Eliminate weeds the old-fashioned way; pull them out.
- If you walk your dog, pick up it's waste and throw it away or flush it down the toilet. Harmful bacteria can enter the water supply from improperly disposed of fecal matter.



Taking Action: Protecting your Private Well Water

The easiest way to protect you own well water is to keep your own property clean:

- Do not dump automotive or cleaning chemicals on your land that could seep into the ground and enter your well.
- Reduce or avoid using pesticides on your property.
- Do not allow animal waste in any area where run-off could carry fecal matter into your well.
- Be sure there are no low lying areas near your well, where runoff can collect and seep into the ground near your well.



A change in **ODOR, TASTE, or COLOR** may mean that your well has become contaminated.

Other Resources:

How to Get Your Lawn and Garden off Drugs
by Carole Rubin

The Environmental Protection Agency's Water Resources web page: www.epa.gov/ebtpages/water.html

The Bernalillo County Office of Environmental Health webpage: www.bernco.gov
> Depts., offices > Environmental Health

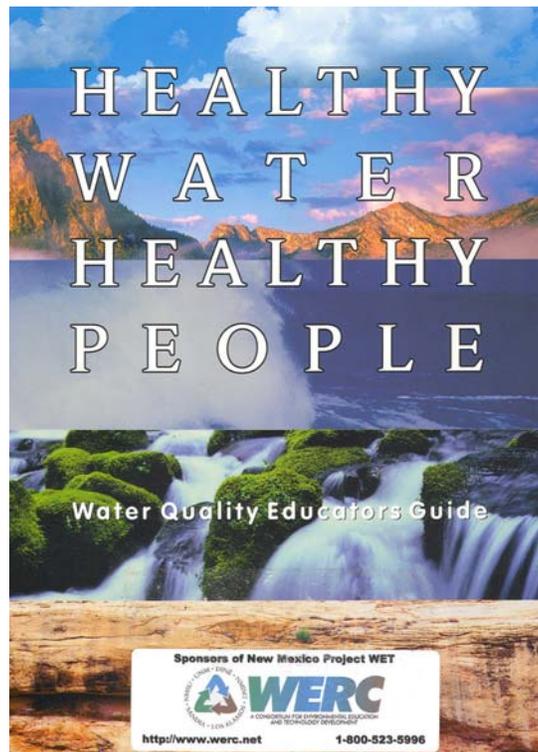
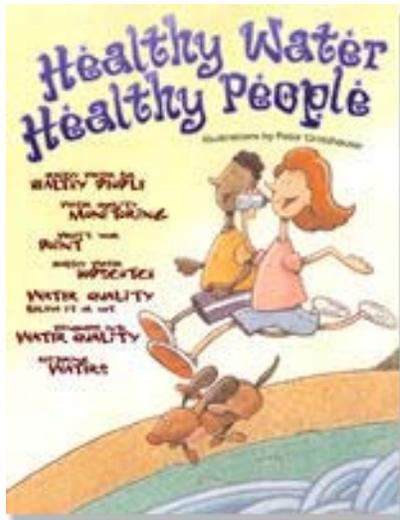
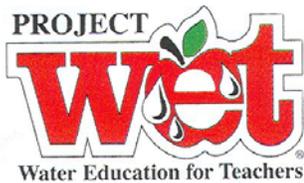
Other Resources:

The Center for Disease Control's
nitrate in drinking water webpage:

www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dpd/healthywater/factsheets/nitrate.htm

Project WET: Healthy Water Healthy People

<http://www.projectwet.org/hwhp/quiz.html>



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