



Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention

An Office of the Department of Health and Human Services

John E. Baldacci, Governor

Brenda M. Harvey, Commissioner

Department of Health and Human Services
Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention
286 Water Street
11 State House Station
Augusta, Maine 04333-0011
Tel: (207) 287-2070; Fax: (207) 287-4172
TTY: 1-800-606-0215

Flooding and Your Well:
Make Sure Your Drinking Water is Safe

If flood water has covered your well cap, your drinking water may be contaminated with bacteria or other contaminants from the flood water. You should not drink or use your well water until the flood waters have gone down, you have inspected your well, and disinfected and tested the well water.

- 1. Once the flood water has gone down below the cap of the well, remove the well cap. Inspect the well for damage. You may need to contact a professional well driller, pump installer or electrician for a complete inspection and repair of any well part before use.

- 2. Pour the appropriate amount of chlorine bleach into the well. Use the table to find how much bleach is right for your well. Replace the well cap.

- 3. Turn on the water at all faucets, sill cocks and similar outlets one at a time until you can smell chlorine, then turn the water off.

- 4. Allow the chlorine in the water to stand in your pipes overnight. Then flush the chlorinated water from the system using an outside faucet and garden hose. Do not flush the chlorinated water into your septic system. You may resume using the toilet but your septic system is not designed to handle the large amount of water needed to flush the chlorine from your system. Run water through the hose until you can no longer smell chlorine. The chlorine in the water will also kill plants, including grass, so be careful where you run the water hose.







- 5. After disinfection, you should test your water for coliform bacteria to make sure the water is safe. You should wait 3 or 4 days after disinfection to make sure the chlorine is completely gone. Sample kits are available from private and state labs. Check the yellow pages under "Water Testing".

Table with 2 columns: Depth of Well, Amount of Chlorine bleach. Includes sub-headers for Drilled Well and Dug Well.

For more information

Maine CDC Drinking Water Program (207) 287-2070 or online at www.medwp.com
Information about well water safety: http://wellwater.maine.gov

How to Take a Total Coliform Bacteria Test

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| STEP 1 |  | DO NOT RINSE OUT BOTTLE The liquid in the bottle is meant to be there and will not contaminate your sample. |
| STEP 2 |  | REMOVE FAUCET SCREEN or other hoses or aerators from the end of the faucet. |
| STEP 3 |  | DISINFECT THE FAUCET by dipping the end in a cap full of bleach before running the water. This is optional but is a good idea. |
| STEP 4 |  | RUN COLD WATER FOR AT LEAST 5 MINUTES to ensure that the water you are sampling has not been sitting in the pipes or tanks for a long time. |
| STEP 5 |  | TURN THE WATER DOWN so it does not splash. Then fill the bottle only to the shoulder. |
| STEP 6 |  | SCREW ON CAP TIGHTLY and take special care not to touch the inside of the cap or bottle. |
| STEP 7 | | FILL OUT PAPERWORK and mail it to the lab with the filled bottle. Keep a copy of the paperwork. |
| | | *Important* The lab must receive the sample within 30 hours from the time the sample is taken |