



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 pollutants. The Drinking Water Program recommends that you do not drink your use your well water until the flood waters recede and you've had a chance to inspect your well and disinfect and test your well water.



Photo: Pomperaug District Department of Health

Follow these steps to disinfect your well if it has been exposed to flood waters:

1. Once the water has completely receded from the well and **the power to the pump has been turned off**, remove the well cap. Inspect the well for any damage. You may need to contact a professional well driller, pump installer, or electrician for a complete inspection and repair. Ensure all parts are in working order before you use your well.
2. Using the table on the right, determine the appropriate amount of chlorine bleach to add to your well. Pour bleach down your well and replace the well cap. Restore power to the pump.
3. Turn on all your water taps, faucets, sill cocks, and other outlets one at a time until you smell chlorine. Then, turn off the water.
4. Allow the disinfected water to stand in your pipes overnight. Once the water has sat in the pipes for at least six hours, flush the chlorinated water from the system using an outside faucet and garden hose. Run water through the hose until you can no longer smell chlorine. Be careful where you direct the hose as the chlorinated water will kill plants, including grass. Do not flush the chlorinated water into your septic system. (You may resume toilet use.)
5. After disinfection, wait 3-4 days and then test your water for coliform bacteria to make sure the water is safe. Sample kits are available from private and state labs. You can find a list of laboratories on the Drinking Water Program website: <http://bit.ly/dwplabs>

Drilled Well	
Well depth (feet)	Chlorine bleach quantity
50	2½ cups
100	1½ quarts
150	2 quarts
200	2½ quarts
250	3 quarts

Dug Well	
Well depth (feet)	Chlorine bleach quantity
5	½ gallon
10	1 gallon
15	1½ gallon
20	2 gallons

For more information contact the Drinking Water Program's Private Well Coordinator, Haig Brochu at 592-3190 or haig.brochu@maine.gov or visit www.wellwater.maine.gov for information on well water safety.

