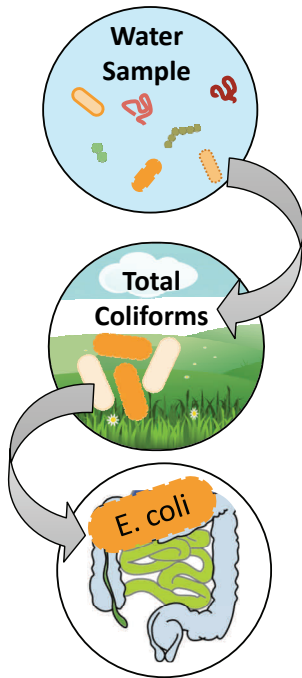


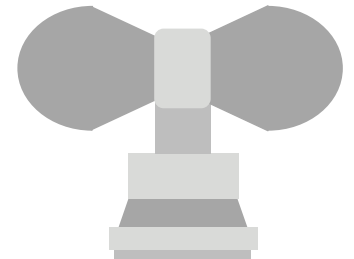
# Bacteria in Private Well Water



Bacteria testing looks for signs of bacteria and viruses that can make people sick.

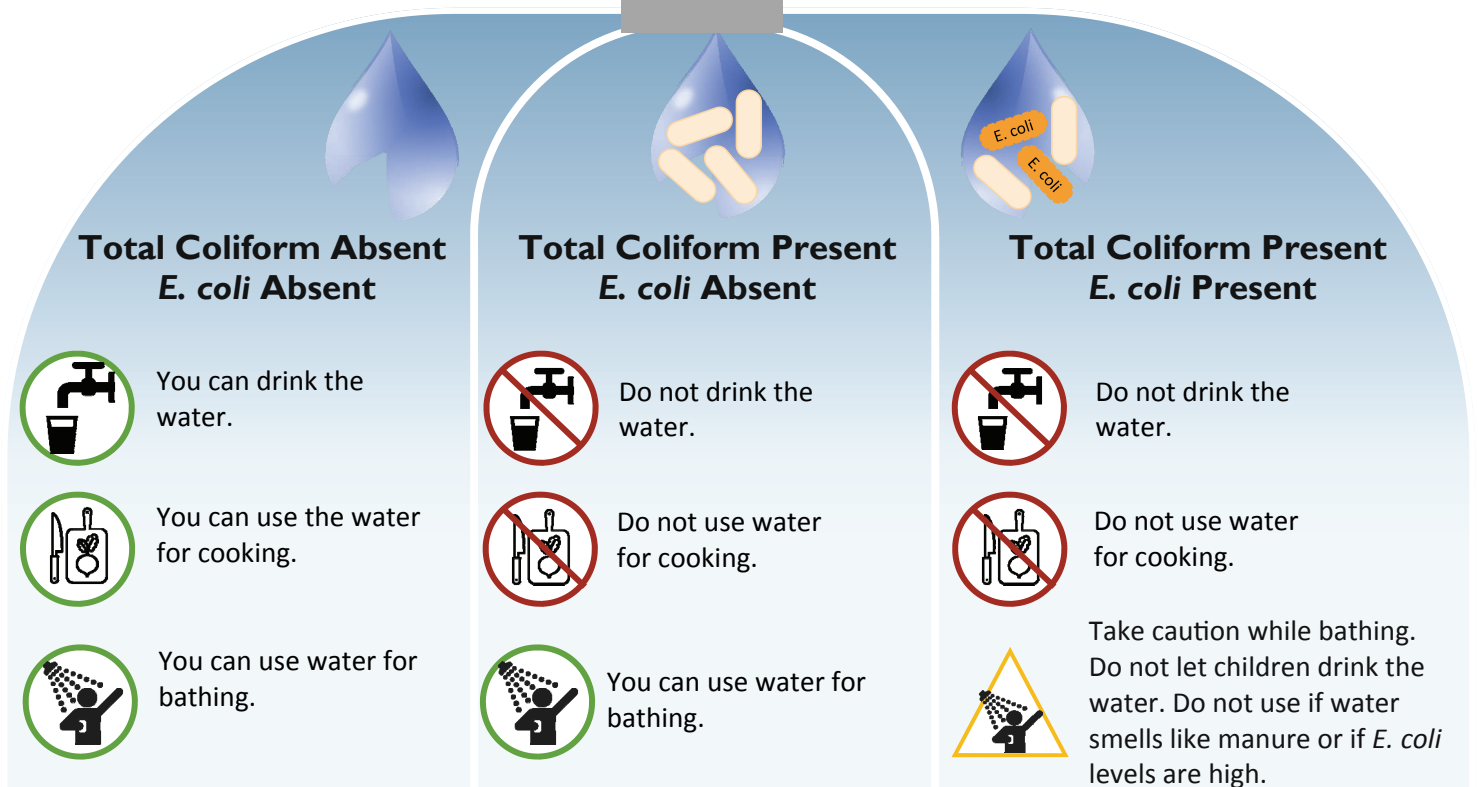
- **Total Coliform** are a group of bacteria that are common in nature.  
**When total coliform are present**, the well may be contaminated by soil or feces.
- **E. coli** are a type of coliform bacteria found in the gut of mammals.  
**When E. coli are present**, the well may be contaminated by human or animal feces.

Wells can become contaminated with bacteria when work is done on the well, if the well was not built properly, or if there are nearby sources of animal or human waste.



## Test Your Well Once a Year

Test right away if there is a change in **color, taste, or smell** of your water.



**The next page has steps to follow if bacteria are in your well**

**WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES**

Division of Public Health | Bureau of Environmental and Occupational Health

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P-02132 (04/2018)



# Steps to take if your well has bacteria:



## 1. Do not drink the water

- Do not use the water for drinking, preparing food, brushing your teeth, and bathing infants.
- Do not use water from your refrigerator or other appliances (e.g., ice machines) that take water from your well.
- Throw out your ice and drinks made with your well water.



## 2. Use a safe water source

**Safe water:** bottled water, water from a well without a bacteria problem, tap water that you boiled for one minute (unless you have something else in your water like nitrate or arsenic).

- Use safe water for drinking, preparing food, washing fruits and vegetables, brushing your teeth, and bathing infants.
- Use the same safe water for your pets. Contact your veterinarian for more advice.



## 3. Take a confirmation sample

- Collect another water sample and have it analyzed to confirm the results.
- Be sure to use the proper [sampling procedure](#).
- If the confirmation sample also shows that your well has bacteria, follow steps 4 to 6.



## 4. Disinfect your well

- Inspect your well and the surrounding area for possible sources of contamination like flooding, a leaking septic system, or animal waste.
- Have your well disinfected by a [licensed well driller or pump installer](#).
- Retest your well a week after disinfection.



## 5. Wash dishes properly

- Use the heated dry cycle or sanitize cycle on your dishwasher.
- To wash dishes by hand:
  - Wash with soap and water as normal.
  - Rinse with safe water.
  - Make a sanitizing solution: mix one teaspoon of liquid bleach with one gallon of water.
  - Soak dishes in the sanitizing solution for at least one minute.
  - Let the dishes air dry completely.



## 6. Monitor your well closely

- Re-test every six months to ensure disinfection has worked.
- If disinfection has not worked:
  - Have your well inspected by a [licensed well driller or pump installer](#).
  - Consider [replacing your well](#) or installing a [certified treatment device](#).

### Talk to your doctor if you have specific health concerns

or if you or a family member have diarrhea, nausea, vomiting, cramps, or fever that you believe is related to your well.