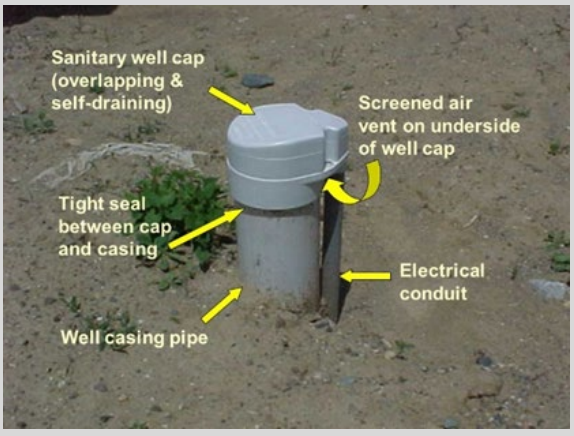
Information for Private Well Owners

How often should I test my well?

- Test your well at least once a year for biological contaminants. It is recommended that you do this in the spring or early summer.
- If you live in an agricultural area, you may also wish to test for arsenic, nitrates, and pesticides.
- If you live in an older home built before 1987, you may also wish to test for lead.

What if my well is contaminated?

- Stop using your well water.
- Use bottled water for drinking, preparing food, and making ice until the problem is resolved.
- Contact the Jefferson County Health Department and request that your well be evaluated. A sanitarian may:
  - Review the records of your well and nearby septic systems,
  - Conduct a sanitary survey of the area around your well,
  - Examine your well head, and/or
  - Take another water sample after shock chlorination of your well



What should I do if one of my family members is ill and I think it is because of our well water?

- If you or a family member are experiencing symptoms like diarrhea or vomiting and think it may be due to contaminated well water. Seek medical treatment from your physician or a medical clinic or hospital and contact the Jefferson County Health Department to inform them of your illness. It is recommended that you stop using your well water during this time and follow the procedure described above.

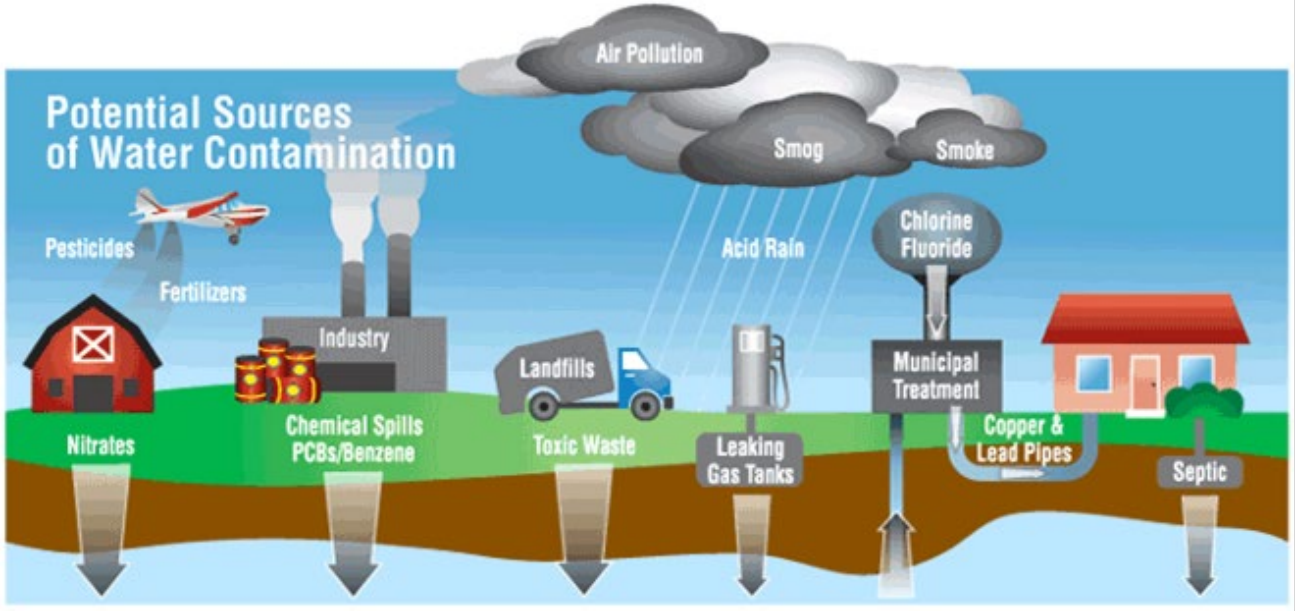
What should I do if my well water sample came back positive for total coliform or E. coli?

- Short-term solutions:
  - Shock chlorinate your well and then retest the well for biological contamination after the chlorine is no longer present. (See our "Jefferson County Health Department Procedures for Super-Chlorination of Drilled Wells" pamphlet for more information.)
  - Until your well water tests negative for bacteria, use bottled water or boil your well water for at least one minute before consumption.

- Long-term solutions: If your well water retest still indicates bacterial contamination, consult the health department or a water treatment company about appropriate solutions. Some options may include:
  - Improving the construction of your well,
  - Installing a chlorinator,
  - Installing a sediment filter and ultraviolet disinfection system,
  - Installing other water treatment devices, or
  - Drilling a new well

How can I protect my well from water contaminants?

- Common well water contaminants include:
  - Biological contaminants including bacteria, viruses, and parasites. Most biological contaminants originate from or near the surface. Common sources of biological contamination are failing septic systems, manure from livestock, fecal waste from wild animals and pets, and flooding.
  - Chemical contaminants including pesticides, herbicides, fertilizers, lead, and petrochemicals. Common sources of chemical contaminants are leaking fuel tanks, spills or improper disposal of toxic chemicals, lead pipes, and agricultural application of fertilizers, pesticides, and herbicides.



- You can prevent well contamination by:
  - Maintaining your septic system and pumping your septic tank every 3-5 years,
  - Not storing or disposing of chemicals or fuels within 100' of your well,
  - Keeping pets and livestock away from your well, and
  - Replacing your well cap if it is missing or defective.

How to can I protect karst areas in Jefferson County from groundwater contamination?

- Karst is a term that describes a limestone area with few surface streams and many caves and underground solution channels. In karst areas, water moves from the surface into underground drainage channels with little natural filtration. This allows groundwater in karst areas to be easily polluted by contaminated surface water.

- Groundwater in karst areas can be protected by preventing or limiting the introduction of contaminants into the environment. Homeowners can do their part by maintaining their septic system regularly and minimizing their fertilizer and pesticide use.

- **General Laboratory Resources:**

  WV Office of Laboratory Services – South Charleston Lab
  167 11th. Avenue
  South Charleston WV 25303
  Website: https://dhhr.wv.gov/ols/Pages/default.aspx
  Phone: (304) 558-3530

- **Certified Microbiological Contaminant Laboratory Services:**

  WV Office of Laboratory Services -
  Kearneysville Lab
  1948 Wiltshire Road, Suite 7
  Kearneysville, WV 25430
  Phone: (304) 725-5832

  Reliance Laboratories, Inc. – Martinsburg
  25 Crimson Circle
  Martinsburg, WV 25403
  Phone: (304) 596-208

  Shenandoah Bacteriological Laboratory
  460 Reynolds Road
  Cross Junction, VA 22625
  Phone: (540) 888-4500

  West Virginia Department of Agriculture -
  Moorefield Field Office
  60 B Moorefield Industrial Park Road
  Moorefield, WV 26836
  Phone: (304) 366-1461

- **Certified Chemical Contaminant Laboratory Services:**

  WV Office of Laboratory Services –
  Big Chimney Lab -Environmental Chemistry
  4710 Chimney Drive, Suite G
  Charleston, WV 25302
  Phone: (304) 965- 2696
  Tests for: Trace metals, inorganics,
  organics; pesticides and herbicides

  Fredrick County Division of Utilities –
  Solid Waste Management Laboratory
  4520 Metropolitan Court
  Fredrick MD 221704
  Phone: (301) 600-1597
  Tests for: Metals and inorganics

  Washington County Environmental
  Management Laboratory
  16232 Elliott Parkway
  Williamsport, MD 21795
  Phone: (240) 313-2603
  Tests for: Metals and inorganics

Resources:

https://dhhr.wv.gov/ols/labs/Documents/Environmental%20Chemistry/waterqualitylabs.pdf

https://www.health.ny.gov/environmental/water/drinking/coliform_bacteria.htm

http://www.jeffersoncountywv.org/home/showdocument?id=3783

https://mde.state.md.us/programs/Water/Water_Supply/Documents/MD_Cert_Drink_Water_Lab_List.pdf

http://www.ongov.net/health/env/documents/NYSDOHTestYourWell.pdf

http://privatewellclass.org