

APPLETREE



Selecting the right option for you!

A guide to ensuring safe drinking water

Why does the quality of my water matter?

Drinking contaminated water makes it more likely that you will experience negative health outcomes, including certain types of chronic disease. Contaminants can be naturally occurring (arsenic, uranium, etc.) or synthetic (PFAS, 1-4, dioxane, etc.). Residents served by public or community water systems are protected by rules, regulations and processes in place to ensure that the water they drink is safe; however, many residents in New Hampshire get their water from private wells. While there are guidelines and recommendations related to residential well water quality, testing and treatment are not required. Understanding the quality of your drinking water can help you to make informed decisions to protect the health of you and others in your household.

How do I know if my water is safe?

Residential well contamination is common, and most contaminants have no taste, smell or color. The only way to understand the quality of your water is to have it tested. NHDES recommends conducting a standard analysis and radon analysis every three to five years, and testing for bacteria and nitrate yearly. While we are still learning about the extent of PFAS contamination and about the health impacts of PFAS, NHDES recommends testing for PFAS contamination if you have the resources to do so. You should continue to test your water if you use a treatment system (see below) to ensure that your system is working properly. A list of [New Hampshire accredited labs](#) and recommended tests can be found on the [NHDES website](#).

I've tested my water, now what?



The New Hampshire [Be Well Informed](#) site can help you to understand what treatment options would work for you based on the contaminants found in your water. There are many water treatment options available. **Water treatment options are not one-size-fits-all, so before investing in a choice, make sure that you've done the recommended testing!** NHDES staff can also offer assistance; the Drinking Water and Groundwater Bureau can be reached by calling [\(603\) 271-2513](tel:603-271-2513), or by emailing dwgbinfo@des.nh.gov.

While your particular water quality is an important factor to consider, there are other considerations, including cost, whether or not there are people who are more at risk for negative health outcomes in your home (for example, babies or children, people with health conditions, etc.), your comfort level in terms of risk, and whether or not you are in need of a temporary solution (for example, if you are renting short-term or are scheduled to be connected to a public water system in the near future) or a longer-term solution. In addition to treating contaminated water, seeking an alternative source of water (such as bottled water) may be a temporary alternative solution to consider.

Depending on your particular circumstances, including the factors noted above, one solution may be a better fit for you than another. On the other side of this page, you will find a table with the pros and cons of different options, as well as questions that you can ask water treatment specialists so that you can make an informed decision that is right for you.

What are the pros and cons of the treatment options available to me?

Depending on your circumstances, some of the more common options that you may consider are bottled water, pitcher filter, counter top filter, faucet-mounted filter, under-the-counter treatment system, or a whole-house treatment system. Below is a table of information about these options, along with some of the pros and cons of each. **If you select a treatment option, check to make sure that it is [NSF International certified](#) for the contaminants you are treating!**

Bottled water: Bottled water can offer a short-term solution to reducing exposure to a contaminated source		
Pros: Inexpensive if used only for drinking; readily available.	Cons: Inconvenience of purchasing and moving large quantities of bottled water; disposal or recycling of plastic water bottles; bottled water is regulated by the FDA, which is not consistent with EPA standards; expensive and inconvenient if used for all water consumed and used in cooking.	
Point-of-Use (POU) treatment (different types described below): Filters water from one location in the home to eliminate specific contaminants. Remember to check for NSF International certification!		
Pitcher filter or countertop filter	Pros: Inexpensive; does not require installation or changes to plumbing; easy to use.	Cons: Filters a small amount of water at a time; filters must be replaced regularly; slow filtering; takes up space on the countertop or in the refrigerator; may be inconvenient or impractical if used for all water consumed and used in cooking.
Faucet-mounted filter	Pros: Inexpensive; can be installed and maintained by resident; filters last longer before replacement.	Cons: Do not work with all faucets, may slow water flow; filters must be replaced regularly.
Under the counter treatment system	Pros: Range in price; filter larger amounts of water; do not take up countertop space; some models can be installed and maintained by resident; filters last longer before replacement.	Cons: Some units moderately expensive initially; may require changes to plumbing; takes up space under the counter; filters must be replaced regularly.
Whole-house treatment system or Point-of-Entry (POE): Different options available depending on contaminants present. Remember to check for NSF International certification!		
Pros: Treats all water used in the home	Cons: Expensive initially, requires ongoing maintenance, requires professional installation and maintenance, requires changes to plumbing.	

Before I select a system; what should I know first, and what questions should I ask a vendor?

Before making any decisions, make sure that you've worked with an accredited lab to do comprehensive testing! You can also do your homework by using the [Be Well Informed](#) web site. Understanding your specific water quality is the first step to making an informed decision. The questions below will help you in selecting a treatment option:

1. What types of systems are recommended based on my water quality and how I use the water?
2. Is this system NSF International certified?
3. What are the total purchase price and expected maintenance and testing costs of the recommended treatment? How frequently will maintenance and testing be required?
4. Will the unit substantially increase electrical usage in the home?
5. What is the expected lifetime of the product and warranty coverage?
6. How many systems have you installed to address contamination similar to mine?
7. Are there reviews or testimonials about your work that I can review?