

WATER TALK

BE WELL AWARE:

Build and maintain your well

If you are planning to have a new well built, don't go it alone. Get in touch with your provincial or territorial government to find out what regulations you need to follow.

There are specific requirements set out in most provinces and territories to ensure that wells are properly constructed.

Licensed well contractors know the best practices and regulations on how water wells should be built, and are required to follow these regulations. Hiring a licensed well contractor will help you ensure it is done right.

If you plan to build a new home that will be served by your private well, have your well built first. Then you will know you have a water supply that will meet your needs.

Location, location, location.....

Choosing a good location for your well is an important step that can reduce the chances of contamination.

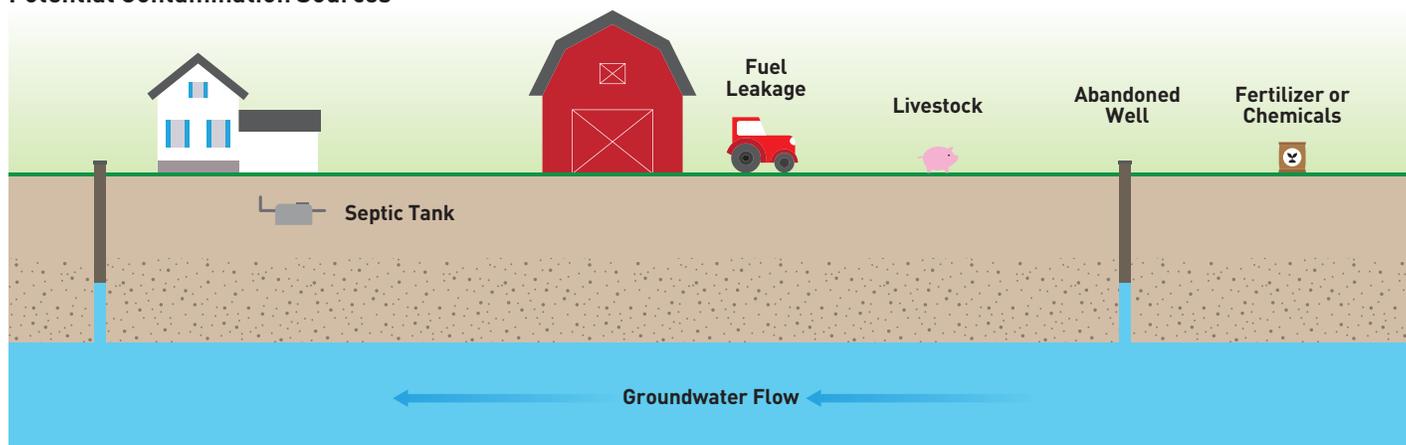
When choosing a location, make sure your well is uphill or far enough away from possible sources of contamination, such as:

- ▶ Septic systems
- ▶ Pet or livestock waste
- ▶ Parked vehicles
- ▶ Stored chemicals, gasoline or oil containers

Most provinces and territories have regulations that will set out how far your well should be from possible sources of contamination. Find out what these regulations are and follow them.

Think about the drainage near your wellhead, which is the physical structure of the well that is above ground. Rain or melting snow should drain away from this location so that water does not collect or pool around your wellhead, even during the wettest seasons.

Potential Contamination Sources



Safety first

Licensed well contractors will help ensure that your well is built correctly and that important considerations are taken into account, including:

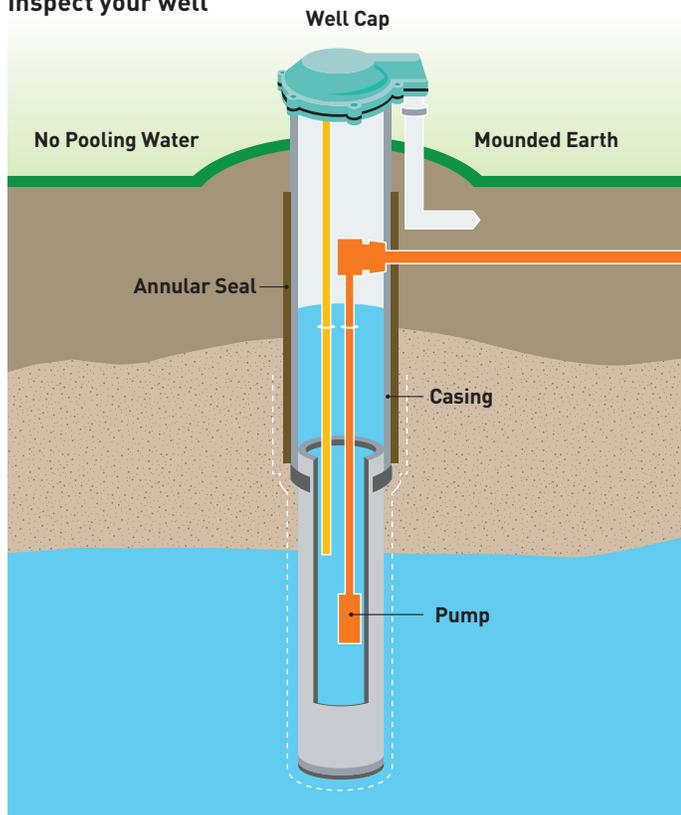
- ▶ The suitability of the ground in which your well will be constructed
- ▶ How high your well casing and wellhead should be above ground level
- ▶ How deep the well casing and annular seal should be; the annular seal is the watertight material between the drilled hole and the well casing.

Maintaining your well properly

One of the things you can do to help keep your drinking water safe is to inspect your well at least once per year to confirm the following:

- ▶ The well cap is securely in place and watertight
- ▶ The vent is in the right place, screened and not blocked in any way

Inspect your well



- ▶ No signs of settling or cracking of the surface that surrounds the well casing
- ▶ No signs of damage or cracking of the well casing
- ▶ No leaky connections in the plumbing between the well and the house
- ▶ Pumps and pipes are in good condition
- ▶ Any changes in your water quality results have been investigated

Any joints, cracks or leaky connections should be sealed or repaired. Some repairs or inspections may need to be done by a licensed well contractor.

Reduce the risk of contamination by:

- ▶ Leaving a trimmed grassy area of at least three metres around your well
- ▶ Making sure the area around the well remains sloped, so water runs away from the well
- ▶ Keeping the area around the well free of animal wastes, leaves, snow, debris or obstacles
- ▶ Avoiding the use or storage of fertilizers, herbicides, fuel, oil or chemicals near the well

Events, land use changes or activities near your well

The water that supplies your well can be affected by land use changes, unforeseen events or activities near your well or property.

Over time, it is good to remain aware of what is going on in your area to ensure that there are no negative impacts on your well water. Some examples include:

- ▶ Floods, fires, spills or droughts. See *Be Well Aware – Emergencies and your well*
- ▶ Changes in land use near your well such as a new septic system, grazing animals or piling of manure, new agricultural or industrial activity or major construction
- ▶ Changes in land drainage which have led to ponding of water around your well

By remaining aware of events or changes such as these, you will be better equipped to spot concerns, investigate and seek appropriate advice or assistance on protecting and maintaining your well.

Test your well water and know where to get help and advice

Test your well water at least twice a year for the presence of bacteria that can indicate potential contamination. If your well is shallow—less than 25 metres of casing—or in bedrock and there is a septic

system on your property or nearby, you should test your well more often and consider treating the water. If you suspect any changes to the condition of your well, or the quality of your well water, have your well water tested as soon as possible and seek appropriate advice. For more information, contact your local public health offices.

See *Be Well Aware – Test your well water* for more detailed information on testing your well water.



Need more information?

For more information on drinking water quality:

Visit Health Canada's Water Quality website

www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/topics/health-environment/water-quality-health.html

Email: hc.water-eau.sc@canada.ca

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