



Disinfecting a Drilled Well

Fact Sheet

When to Disinfect

There are many reasons why bacteria may be present in your well water. Bacteria can enter the well system through new well construction, the installation or replacement of a well pump, during plumbing repairs, or when the system is flooded. Use the following steps to prevent sickness due to these harmful bacteria.



After flooding, it is important to check the bacteria levels in your well.

Disinfection: Step by Step

1. Notify all users not to consume water.
2. **Turn off electric power to the well.**
3. Mix one half (½) gallon liquid chlorine in a container with 5 to 10 gallons of water.
4. Remove the well cap and pour the chlorine-water mixture into the well.
5. Attach a garden hose to an outside faucet and run water into the well for 1 to 2 hours. This will recirculate the water into the well and ensure mixing of the chlorine and water. (*Restore power for this step.*)
6. Wash the interior of the well, the cap, and the pump apparatus thoroughly with the chlorinated water. Remove the hose and replace the cap.
7. Turn off the circuit breaker to the electric hot water heater, or turn the gas control on a gas water heater to "pilot".
8. Run each tap both outside and inside the building one at a time until there is a smell of chlorine, and then turn the taps off. Include hot and cold water taps, outside taps, barn taps, showers, and taps at the bottom of the hot water heater and pressure tank. Flush each toilet and run each washing machine and dishwasher until chlorine is smelled at the fixture.
9. Let sit for a minimum of 12 hours, preferably 24 hours. **Do not use water during this time.**
10. Flush the well water from an outside faucet into a "safe" area, such as the lawn or an open field. It is best to flush the system intermittently, running the water for no longer than one hour at a time. Flush the hot water tank using a hose to the sump pump or outside.
11. Finish flushing the remainder of the system by running each faucet and fixture until no chlorine odor is detected. The small amount of chlorine left in the building's plumbing system can safely be put down the drain.

Chlorinating the well will not provide a permanent solution to an ongoing contamination problem. If bacteria are detected after chlorination, this is evidence that contamination is continuing to enter the system; this could be a problem with ground water, well, storage or plumbing. If bacterial contamination persists, repair or replacement of the well may be required.

For more information:

- St. Mary's County Health Department: Environmental Health Services- 301-475-4321