



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Ozaukee County Public Health Department offers Arsenic test kits for Homeowners with well water

The Ozaukee County Public Health Department is advising private well owners to check the health of their wells by testing for arsenic. The Health Department will be offering low cost (20\$ each) well kits for arsenic analysis of well water starting May 1st. Analytical services will be completed by the UW-Oshkosh Aquatic Research Laboratory.

Homeowners may purchase the kits at the Health Department during normal work hours. Then, homeowners sample their well water and return the kit with completed sampling form to the Health Department. Laboratory results will only be sent to homeowners.

In recent years homeowners in Ozaukee County have become aware of arsenic in well water. Health Department staff has addressed hundreds of inquiries regarding arsenic testing and results interpretation. If you own a private well in Ozaukee County, we recommend testing the water for arsenic.

Safe, contaminant-free water is one of the most vital resources Wisconsin citizens have for drinking and cooking. Municipalities regularly test the drinking water supplies to ensure they are safe, but with private wells, it's the owner's responsibility. Wisconsin has approximately one million private wells, most of which are not tested for arsenic on a periodic basis. Arsenic consumption at levels above the federal standard can cause cancers, hair loss, tremors, numbness, and skin abnormalities.

"Testing well water is one of the easiest things private well owners can do to take care of the health and well-being of themselves and their loved ones," said Dan Ziegler, Environmental Health Specialist with the Ozaukee County Public Health Department. "We are urging residents to test their well water for arsenic at least once every five years."



Arsenic is a metallic element that is found in soil and rock. Under certain conditions arsenic can be released into groundwater and enter local well water.

Currently the US Environmental Protection Agency health standard for arsenic in well water is 10 parts per billion. Test results released in 2009 by local labs showed that 28% of the wells tested in the Town of Cedarburg had arsenic levels above the federal standard and another 14% of Town of Cedarburg wells tested had detectable levels of arsenic, although less than the standard. At the same time private well water tested in Mequon only showed that 4% of the wells tested had arsenic in well water above the federal standard. However, another 17% of wells tested in Mequon had detectable levels of arsenic less than the standard.

The risk factors for cancers of the gastro-intestinal tract, kidney and bladder increase as the parts per billion of arsenic in well water increase. The amount of well water that you consume everyday is another important risk factor. The good news is that once arsenic is identified, the water can be treated to be safe for consumption.

Health department hours are from 8:30AM to 5:00PM daily. Please contact us at 262-284-8170 local, 262-238-8170 metro, or click on our website at: <http://www.co.ozaukee.wi.us/PublicHealth/Arsenic.htm>

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