



Renfrew County and
District Health Unit

FACT SHEET

Caring for your water well during and after a flood



Water wells can be contaminated by flooding. While this contamination may involve an unpleasant taste, odour, or cloudiness of the well water, some contamination can only be recognized after water quality testing.

Under flood conditions surface water may enter directly into the water source via the well itself, an old abandoned well, or some other nearby excavation, bypassing the natural filtering process. Testing and recovery efforts should be focused on possible bacterial contamination.

While the majority of water wells are likely unaffected, each homeowner should take certain steps to ensure their well water is safe to use for drinking, cooking and/or bathing. As a first step, a flooded well should be disinfected once the flood waters immediately around the well have gone

away. Chlorination is a procedure used to disinfect a water well contaminated with bacteria. Visit <https://www.rcdhu.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Fact-Sheet-Private-Well-Disinfection-Instructions.pdf> for instructions on how to disinfect your well.

Water from all wells in the flooded area should be tested for quality. In order to do this, you should obtain a water sample bottle from the Renfrew County and District Health Unit (RCDHU). Wait at least 2 days after disinfecting the well to collect a water sample to make sure that the chlorine disinfectant is out of the well. **Do not collect a water sample until the chlorine is gone.** To consider the well water safe to drink, RCDHU recommends that you get 3 good tests taken 2-4 weeks apart.

Until testing shows your well water to be safe, all water for drinking, cooking and bathing should be boiled. Bringing water to a rolling boil for 1 minute will kill most organisms. If you suspect or are informed that the water is contaminated with chemicals, seek another source of water immediately, such as bottled water.

If water testing indicates that your water well has some level of contamination, then the well should be chlorinated and retested.

Some water wells will be unaffected by flood water and not be contaminated. However, all wells should still be tested 3 times per year to monitor for contamination. A contaminated well may have to be chlorinated more than once. Do not drink, or cook with this water until a clean sample result is obtained.

Further information can be obtained by contacting a public health inspector with the Renfrew County and District Health Unit at 613-735-8654, extension 555 or visit www.rcdhu.com.

Visit us at www.rcdhu.com or call 613-735-8654
or 1-800-267-1097, Ext. 555

"Optimal Health for All in Renfrew County and District"