

URANIUM IN YOUR WELL WATER

Tips to Protect Your Well Water



IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & WELFARE
DIVISION OF PUBLIC HEALTH

Private wells can provide a clean, safe source of water if they are properly located, built, and maintained. As a private well owner, it is your responsibility to make sure that your water is safe to use by testing for contaminants. This brochure provides information on uranium and helps you understand the possible health effects of drinking water with high levels of uranium.

WHAT ARE THE HEALTH CONCERNS?

The greatest health risk from drinking uranium is damage to the kidneys. Although this can be a problem for adults, this is more a concern for young children because they eat and drink more per pound of body weight than an adult and their bodies are still developing. Fortunately, the damage can be reversed. Once exposure to uranium has stopped the kidneys can repair themselves. There is no evidence that drinking water with uranium alone will cause cancer. While the main concern is drinking water, uranium can also build up in the plants we eat. Root vegetables such as radishes, carrots, and potatoes, as well as leafy greens like lettuce and spinach absorb the most uranium from well water. Other fruit and vegetable crops are not as likely to absorb uranium. Therefore, if the water you use for your garden is approximately 80 µg/L of uranium or higher, it is recommended that you use a different water source for your garden or grow crops that are less likely to take up uranium.

WHAT CAN I DO TO MAINTAIN MY WATER SYSTEM?

If you install a treatment device, follow the manufacturer's suggested maintenance

WHAT IS URANIUM?

Uranium is a naturally-occurring, mildly-radioactive compound that is commonly found in rocks, soil, and water. Uranium in well water is caused by uranium in the rock where the well is drilled or by mining and refining processes that contaminate the well water.

schedule to be sure your water is safe. Also, your well should be maintained to keep it in good working order. To help keep track of well maintenance, it is recommended that you create and maintain a "system maintenance log." The log should include the location of the well, construction and contractor details, as well as results of any water tests. A copy of a log is available by calling the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare at 1-866-240-3553. For questions about your well water, contact your local public health district (*numbers are located on the back of this brochure*).

TESTING FREQUENCY AND TREATMENT

Contaminant	When to Test	When to Treat Drinking Water
Uranium	Once every 3 to 5 years	If 30 µg/L or higher

HEALTH DISTRICT CONTACT INFORMATION

Panhandle Health District

208-415-5200
www.phd1.idaho.gov
(serving Benewah, Bonner, Boundary, Kootenai and Shoshone counties)

North Central Health District

208-799-3100
www.idahopublichealth.com
(serving Clearwater, Idaho, Latah, Lewis, and Nez Perce counties)

Southwest District Health

208-455-5400
www.publichealthidaho.com
(serving Adams, Canyon, Gem, Owyhee, Payette and Washington counties)

Central District Health

208-375-5211
www.cdhd.idaho.gov
(serving Ada, Boise, Elmore and Valley counties)

South Central Public Health District

208-737-5900
www.phd5.idaho.gov
(serving Blaine, Camas, Cassia, Gooding, Jerome, Lincoln, Minidoka, and Twin Falls counties)

Southeastern Idaho Public Health

208-233-9080
www.sdhdidaho.org
(serving Bannock, Bear Lake, Bingham, Butte, Caribou, Franklin, Oneida, and Power counties)

Eastern Idaho Public Health District

208-522-0310
www.phd7.idaho.gov
(serving Bonneville, Clark, Custer, Fremont, Jefferson, Lemhi, Madison, and Teton counties)

IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES

Licensed Well Drillers

www.idwr.idaho.gov/apps/well/licensedwelldrillers/

Ground Water Protection Section

Boise: 208-287-4800
www.idwr.idaho.gov

Northern Region, Coeur d'Alene: 208-769-1450

Eastern Region, Idaho Falls: 208-525-7161

Southern Region, Twin Falls: 208-736-3033

Western Region, Boise: 208-334-2190

IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE Water Program

Boise Office 208-332-8597
www.agri.state.id.us

IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND WELFARE

Bureau of Community and Environmental Health

1-866-240-3553
www.healthandwelfare.idaho.gov
bceh@dhw.idaho.gov

Idaho Bureau of Laboratories

208-334-2235
www.statelab.idaho.gov
statelab@dhw.idaho.gov

NSF INTERNATIONAL

Consumer Hotline 1-800-673-8010
www.nsf.org

WHAT CAN I DO TO REMOVE URANIUM FROM MY WATER?

NSF International certified treatment devices such as reverse osmosis and ion exchange systems can be used to remove uranium from water. To determine the best method of removing uranium from your water, call the NSF International Consumer Hotline at 1-800-673-8010.

Note: Boiling water will not remove uranium.

SUGGESTED TESTING SCHEDULE

The table below shows how often you should test your well for contaminants.

Contaminants	How often should I test?
Arsenic Uranium Fluoride	Once every 3 to 5 years
Bacteria Nitrate	Once a Year