

IS YOUR WELL WATER & SEPTIC SYSTEM SAFE?

Are you one of over the 15,000 Gallatin County households that rely on a private well and septic system for your drinking water?



If so, you're the operator of your own water and wastewater treatment systems. This means you are responsible for ensuring your drinking water is safe for your family and that your septic system is functioning properly.



**Gallatin Local
Water Quality District**
(406) 582-3168

**Gallatin City-County
Health Department**
(406) 582-3120

STEP 1

Test your well water annually and maintain your septic system. It's easy to assume your water is safe, but many contaminants are odorless, colorless, and tasteless, so you must test the water to be sure. Septic systems can pose a major health risk to drinking water if they are failing or not maintained.

Follow these best practices:

Test your water annually for bacteria and nitrate at a minimum; after the well has been serviced; or if you notice a change in taste, odor, or color.

- Visually inspect your well every year. Does it have a sanitary well cap? Is it clear of debris? Look for damage to the well cap, and cracks or holes in the well casing or on the surrounding ground surface. Ensure surface runoff drains away from the well.
- Take care of your septic system. Avoid putting kitchen grease down the drain and do not flush personal hygiene products, medications, baby wipes, or other cleaning wipes.
- Clean your septic effluent filter according to the manufacturer's recommendation and visually inspect the area around your drain field to make sure there are no wet areas.
- Every three to five years, hire a professional to pump and inspect your septic system and have your well water tested for a broader suite of analytes.

STEP 2

- Resources are available to learn more about maintaining wells and protecting water quality at the Gallatin Local Water Quality District (GLWQD). Check out glwqd.org for more information.
- The Environmental Health Services (EHS) division of the Gallatin City-County Health Department can answer your questions about septic systems maintenance and permitting. Resources are available online at healthygallatin.org.
- The online based, 10-lesson Private Well Class is available for free at privatewellclass.org.
- Montana State University Extension Water Quality has many homeowner resources online at waterquality.montana.edu, and administers the Well Educated well testing program. Kits for this program are available for pick up at the GLWQD and EHS offices.