

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs): For Residents of Blaine and Gooding Counties

Prepared by South Central Public Health District 05.10.2017

For residents of Blaine and Gooding counties

Is my water safe drink or use?

1. If the well water looks, smells or tastes different than normal, it should not be used for anything other than flushing toilets until the water returns to a normal look and smell, the well has been disinfected, and a laboratory test shows the water clear of bacteria.
 - a. If the sample is clear of coliform bacteria but still has an abnormal look, smell or taste, we recommend that you contact a private water quality specialist for advice (e.g., well driller, Culligan, Kinetico, etc.)
2. If the well water has not had any change to look, taste or smell, but you are concerned, you may test the water for coliform bacteria. Whether or not you use it while you are waiting for the results is up to you.
 - a. If the test results are negative, then you can use the water as normal, but we recommend that you be on the lookout for any changes in water quality.
 - b. If the test results are positive, we advise that you not consume the water until you get a test that is absent for coliform bacteria. You can use the water for other uses. You can contact South Central Public Health District (SCPHD) or a private water quality specialist for advice (e.g., well driller, Culligan, Kinetico, etc.) for suggestions.

What do I do if my test results are positive for total coliform?

Total coliform is a name for a general group of bacteria. Some of the members of this group, like E. coli, can make people sick. Most members of the coliform group cannot, but they are easy and inexpensive to test for. If you have total coliform only, it means that there might be a problem. If the water is still clear and normal, we recommend that they disinfect (bleach) the well per the instructions on our website. That may clear up the problem.

What do I do if my test results are positive for E.coli?

You should not use the water for drinking, brushing teeth, etc. If the water is clear and normal, then boiling for a minute will make the water safe for any use.

Will boiling my water make it safe for my family to drink?

If your water still looks, smells and tastes normal, then boiling the water for 1 minute will make it safe to drink. If the water looks, smells, or tastes different than it normally does, boiling the water will not help.

Can I bathe or shower if my water is clear?

Yes. Just avoid drinking any of the water if you are concerned.

If my well tested positive when should I retest my water?

If the well water looks, smells or tastes different than normal, it should not be used for anything other than flushing toilets until returns to a normal look and smell, the well has been disinfected, and a laboratory test shows the water clear of bacteria.

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If the look, smell and taste have not changed, then the well disinfection procedure should be followed. The procedure for well disinfection can be found on SCPHD's website:

https://phd5.idaho.gov/Docs/EVH-Well_Disinfection.pdf

How long will I need to test my water?

We do not know at this time how long it will take for any particular well to recover. It will depend upon the weather, how the particular well was constructed, how it has been maintained, and where it is.