



Arsenic in Drinking Water

The following information describes the presence of arsenic in Wisconsin's drinking water supplies, potential health effects, testing private well water, and ways to reduce arsenic levels in your drinking water.

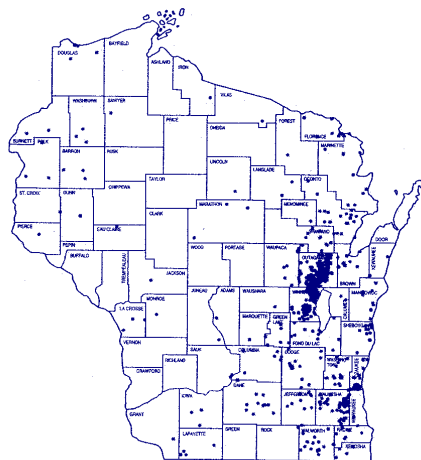
What is arsenic?

Arsenic is an element that occurs naturally in solid, bedrock, groundwater, and ocean water. Traces of arsenic are also found in groundwater, lakes, and rivers. Foods like fruits, vegetables, and seafood can also contain arsenic. Some fruits and vegetables absorb traces of arsenic from the soil they grow in. Ocean fish and seafoods naturally have high levels of an organic non-toxic form of arsenic.



High levels of inorganic arsenic, the most toxic form, have been found in hundreds of private drinking water wells in Wisconsin. Most of the impacted wells are located in Outagamie, Winnebago and Brown Counties where bedrock is naturally high in arsenic.

Drinking Water Wells Tested with Arsenic Levels Greater Than 5.0 ppb



How does arsenic get into the water supply?

The arsenic found in Wisconsin is naturally occurring, deposited in the bedrock layers millions of years ago.

The arsenic from the bedrock is being released into the groundwater and drawn into wells.

Scientists think arsenic is being released into the groundwater because people are using more water than ever before. During the past ten years, about 10,000 new wells have been constructed in this area.

Experts know that increased water demands have lowered the water table which has allowed oxygen to get into the aquifer, creating chemical reactions that release arsenic into the water.



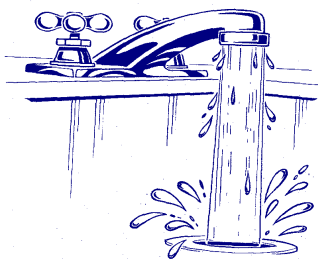
How can arsenic affect my health?

Drinking arsenic-contaminated water has been associated with the following health effects:

- ◆ Skin cancer
- ◆ Internal cancers (bladder, prostate, lung and other sites)
- ◆ Thick, rough skin on hands and feet
- ◆ Unusual skin pigmentation (dappling of dark brown or white splotches)
- ◆ Numbness in the hands and feet
- ◆ Circulatory disorders
- ◆ Tremors
- ◆ Stomach pain, nausea, diarrhea
- ◆ Diabetes (this affect has not been confirmed)

If you think that you or someone in your family has symptoms from arsenic exposure, talk to your doctor. Also, test your well water for arsenic.

How can I find out if my water is safe to drink?



You cannot smell, taste or see arsenic in your private well water. The only way to know if your drinking water contains arsenic, is to have a water sample from your private well tested by a certified laboratory. A list of certified labs is available from the DNR or on at www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/es/science/lc/search/.



Where can I get more information

The following health departments have information about arsenic exposure. Contact your local DNR office or consult the telephone book to find a certified laboratory that can test your water for arsenic.

Health Departments

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| State Dept. of Health and Family Services, Division of Public Health | 608-266-0923 |
| Brown Co. Health Dept. | 920-448-6400 |
| Outagamie Co. Health Dept. | 920-832-5100 |
| Winnebago Co. Health Dept. | 920-232-3000 |

Other Contacts

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| UW-Stevens Point Environmental Task Force Lab | 877-383-8378 |
| DNR— Oshkosh Service Center | 920-424-3050 |

This information was compiled from a brochure produced by Department of Natural Resources in cooperation with the State Department of Health & Family Service. Reviewed by the GCC Education Subcommittee.