



## Well testing

- You may have gotten state help collecting a water sample and taking it to a lab, or you may have applied for a testing voucher and received a kit from one of OHA's partnering laboratories and delivered a water sample to the laboratory yourself (Umpqua Laboratory in Pendleton).
- Please allow up to 2 weeks after sample collection to receive test results.
- OHA pays one time to analyze substances besides nitrate.
- The first test analyzes four substances for private well drinking water safety: nitrate, arsenic, bacteria (*E. coli*, total coliform) and lead. OHA also pays for three non-health related tests that can affect the choice of water treatment system: hardness, iron and manganese.
- OHA will pay for recommended retesting for nitrate (see inside), however, the well user will be responsible to test for contaminants other than nitrate in the future.

## Who can help when you have questions?

All of the organizations below are working in partnership to support community members who use domestic wells and have questions.

- Doulas Latinas International
- Euvalcree
- Oregon Rural Action
- Eastern Oregon Center for Independent Living
- National Center for Alternatives to Pesticides

*Contact your local public health department:*

- Morrow County Public Health Department: [www.co.morrow.or.us/contact](http://www.co.morrow.or.us/contact)
- Umatilla County Public Health Department: [health@umatillacounty.gov](mailto:health@umatillacounty.gov)

*Call 211 to schedule a free test.*



You can get this document in other languages, large print, braille or a format you prefer free of charge. Contact the Domestic Well Safety Program at [Domestic.Wells@odhsoha.oregon.gov](mailto:Domestic.Wells@odhsoha.oregon.gov) or 541-952-9254 (voice/text). We accept all relay calls.

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## What to expect once you test your domestic well for high nitrate in the Lower Umatilla Basin Groundwater Management Area (LUBGWMA) in Morrow and Umatilla Counties

The Oregon Health Authority (OHA) is providing free laboratory tests of domestic (private) well water in the LUBGWMA. Nitrate in drinking water above 10 milligrams per liter (mg/L) can harm your health, and is especially dangerous for formula-fed babies. Many domestic wells in the LUBGWMA have tested high for nitrate.

## What happens after my well is tested?

- **The laboratory sends you and OHA the test results.** OHA will send you a separate letter with more information. This can include fact sheets for any substances that test above health levels, and information about when you should get free nitrate tests in the future to monitor for increases in nitrate levels.
- **If your well tests above 10 mg/L of nitrate,** the county public health department will contact you to get you signed up for free bottled water delivery.
- **For households whose well water tests between 10 mg/L and 25 mg/L,** point-of-use water treatment systems that go under your sink and attach to your faucet are certified for reduction of nitrate to safe levels.
- **If water tests at 25 mg/L or more,** treatment systems are not certified to reduce nitrate, and your household will rely on free water delivery.
- **If water tests above 5 mg/L up to 10 mg/L,** your water is safe for all uses, but because nitrate levels can go higher and lower in different seasons, and because nitrate contamination in groundwater is still rising, OHA will offer free tests every three months for one year to make sure your well water levels don't go over 10 mg/L. If the tests show 10 mg/L or less for one year, OHA will offer free annual testing.
- **If water tests from 0 mg/L up to 5 mg/L,** OHA will offer free annual nitrate testing to make sure your household risk does not change.

## Water delivery

- Free water delivery is available to all households with a laboratory nitrate test result above 10 mg/L.
- Your county public health department will contact you if your water tests high for nitrate.
- If you already pay for bottled water from our vendors Desert Springs Bottled Water or Blue Mountain Bottled Water Company, contact the county public health department to request transfer of your billing account to the LUBGWMA program.
- State-funded water delivery will continue until the state is able to install an in-home water treatment system in your home; for households with many residents, you may receive supplemental water delivery after installation of a water treatment system.
- The state will provide free bottled drinking water delivery based on household size. The typical household receives 20 gallons (five 5-gallon containers) every two weeks to start, call your county public health department to request a change to that amount to meet your household needs.
- Use bottled water for all of your family's drinking and cooking, and for your household pet drinking water such as dogs, cats.
- The state is not able to provide alternate water for livestock. Please contact your veterinarian for questions about nitrate in water related to livestock.
- Once a permanent source of safe drinking water is available, such as through a public water system or, in the very long term, improved groundwater quality, the state will stop delivery of bottled water.

## Water treatment

- For households whose well water tests higher than 10 mg/L but under 25 mg/L, the state will pay for installation and maintenance of one in-home reverse osmosis system "point of use" system that is certified to remove nitrate. This means a system that attaches to a household sink and requires regular replacement of filters.
- The state will automatically add your household to the list for installation of a water treatment system if your water tests in this range; you can confirm you are on the list by reaching out to OHA via the email or phone below.
- The state's contract for water treatment requires that systems be installed by a licensed plumber or licensed treatment installer. While the state has funding available to cover the installation and maintenance of systems, the unavailability of plumbers has meant slow progress. OHA is working to overcome this barrier.
- The state is not able to pay for whole-house water treatment systems due to cost and because such systems can damage your septic system and cause more nitrate pollution.

