

Private Well and Cistern Testing Subsidy Program Frequently Asked Questions

1. Why should I test my private well and/or cistern?

It is your responsibility to ensure your private water supply is safe to drink before using it for any consumptive purposes like drinking, preparing beverages, making ice, preparing food including washing fruits and vegetables, or brushing teeth. You cannot see, taste or smell harmful bacteria or viruses in your water. The only way to know if your water is safe to drink is to test it.

2. When should I test my well for bacteria?

You should test your well for bacteria at least once per year after the spring-snow melt, after heavy rain and/or overland flooding events, after conducting well maintenance, or whenever you notice a change in your water quality (taste, smell, colour, or clarity).

3. What is the Private Well Testing Subsidy Program and how can I participate?

Under this program, the Manitoba government offers private well and cistern owners a once-a-year subsidy for bacteriological (total coliform and *E. coli*) analysis of their drinking water through Duracan Laboratory. The total price to homeowners for a subsidized sample is \$17.67 (including taxes) and is only available at Duracan Laboratory.

You can participate in this program by contacting Duracan Laboratory at 204-960-9995 to arrange for pickup of a water sample kit and a blank chain of custody form to provide your contact information to receive your test results. You will have to follow the step-by-step instructions provided by Duracan Laboratory to collect your sample and return the sample and completed chain of custody form to Duracan Laboratory for analysis.

If you use this program and your first sample result indicates that bacteria are present in your water, you will receive a coupon from Duracan Laboratory for one re-sample, free of charge, to re-sample after taking mitigation steps (like shocking your well) to ensure your water is safe to use.

4. How do I take a water sample for testing?

Water samples must be collected in a sterile container provided by the laboratory. You cannot submit a sample using a jar or washed-out bottle from home. Your sample should be taken from your primary drinking water tap (such as the kitchen faucet), when point-of-use treatment devices such as a carbon or cartridge filter are not operating.

To collect your sample, follow the below steps:

1. Wash your hands or use gloves.
2. Remove the aerator (if present).
3. Sterilize the tap using a flame or alcohol.
4. Run the cold water for 1-2 minutes.
5. Fill the sample container to the indicator line on the bottle.
6. Cap and label your sample.
7. Keep your sample in a fridge or cooler until it can be taken to a laboratory for testing. Samples must be received at the laboratory no later than 30 hours after the sample was taken. Samples that get too warm, freeze, or sit too long will give incorrect results.

An explanatory video is also available at <https://www.gov.mb.ca/sd/water/drinking-water/well-videos/index.html>.

5. How do I receive the results from my water test and what should I do with them?

Once testing by Duracan Laboratory is completed, the results for your water sample will be forwarded to you using your preferred contact method identified on the chain of custody form. If the sample tests positive for bacteria, you will also receive follow-up instructions and a re-sample coupon so you can re-sample your water free-of-charge. If you do not receive the results within two weeks of submission, you should follow up with Duracan Laboratory.

If the results indicate a serious concern about the safety of your water, Duracan Laboratory will immediately try to establish live voice communication with you during their operating hours. Multiple attempts will be made using the contact information provided on your chain of custody form and if live voice communication is not made within 48 hours, your contact information will be forwarded to a Drinking Water Officer to continue contacting you until live voice communication can be made.

If bacteria is present in your water, you should boil your water for at least one minute before use, and until mitigation steps, like shocking the well, can be completed. A helpful video on how to shock your well is available online at <https://www.gov.mb.ca/sd/water/drinking-water/well-videos/index.html>.

It is important that you re-sample your well or cistern following mitigation to verify that the actions were successful, and that your water is safe to consume.

6. Other accredited laboratories

There are five other laboratories in Manitoba accredited to test for bacteria in drinking water and offer this service to private well and cistern owners. The province does not subsidize testing at these laboratories and private well and cistern owners are encouraged to contact the laboratory directly for pricing if interested.

ALS Environmental
1329 Niakwa Road E #12
Winnipeg, Manitoba R2J 3T4
Phone: 204-255-9720
www.alsglobal.com

Duracan Ltd
862 Dufferin Avenue
Winnipeg, Manitoba R2X 0A3
Phone: 204-960-9995
www.duracan.ca

Bureau Veritas
675 Berry Street
Winnipeg, Manitoba R3H 1A7
Phone: 204-772-7276
<https://group.bureauveritas.com>

Horizon Laboratory Ltd
4055 Portage Avenue
Winnipeg, Manitoba R3K 2E8
Phone: 204-488-2035
www.horizonlab.ca

Central Testing Laboratory
Unit 9 – 851 Lagimodiere Blvd.
Winnipeg, Manitoba R2J 3K4
Phone: 204-237-9128
www.ctl.mb.ca

Southeast Enviro Testing
Unit 13 – 90 Brandt Street
Steinbach, Manitoba R5G 0T3
Phone: 204-228-9235
www.southeastenvirotesting.com

Where can I find additional information?

- For inquiries related to drinking water safety, testing or water usage, visit the Office of Drinking Water website at <https://www.gov.mb.ca/sd/water/drinking-water/index.html> or contact the Office of Drinking Water directly at 204-945-5762 or odw@gov.mb.ca.
- For inquiries related to well maintenance and construction, contact groundwater@gov.mb.ca.
- For health-related concerns relating to your drinking water, talk with your family doctor or contact Health Links–Info Santé at 204-788-8200 or 1-888-315-9257, or your local public health office at <https://www.gov.mb.ca/health/publichealth/offices.html>.