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# ENVIRONMENTAL Fact Sheet

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## Drinking Water Safety Requirements and Recommendations for Child Care Programs

### Who is Responsible for Making Sure Your Water is Safe to Drink?

Child care facilities fall into three categories with respect to drinking water safety:

- ◆ **Served by a public water system** – Many child care facilities are served by community public water systems, such as municipal systems, that bill their customers for water. These systems provide their customers with an annual water quality report (sometimes called a consumer confidence report). If you don't have a copy of the most recent report from your water system, you may contact them or the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (NHDES). Child care centers located in multi-tenant buildings that are not served by community public water systems might be served by the building's "non-transient, non-community" public water system. These systems are also regulated by NHDES. Child care center operators can contact the building owner or NHDES for more information.
- ◆ **Have their own wells and have 25 or more staff and children on any given day** – These facilities are considered "non-transient, non-community" public water systems and are regulated by NHDES. These centers are **required** to have a licensed water system operator, to treat water as necessary to meet federal and state health-based standards, and to test the water to ensure that they are meeting those standards.
- ◆ **Have their own wells but have fewer than 25 staff and children on any given day** – These centers have private wells, which are **not** regulated by NHDES. The most critical aspects of drinking water safety are currently addressed by the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services' (NHDHHS) Child Care Licensing Unit, but many are not. Specifically, NHDHHS licensing requirements were changed in 2017 to address lead, copper, fluoride, arsenic, uranium and several acute contaminants (those that can cause illness quickly) including bacteria, nitrate and nitrite. For more information about licensing requirements, visit the [NHDHHS Child Care Licensing webpage](#) or call (603) 271-9025.

### Water Testing Recommendations

If your facility is considered a *public water system* and is regulated by NHDES, you are already performing the necessary testing.

If your facility uses a private well, NHDES recommends that you have the water tested according to NHDES' recommendations for private wells. You need to test the water to know what is in it; many contaminants are odorless and tasteless and your neighbor's well test cannot tell you the quality of your water. Search the

internet for “NHDES private well testing” or call NHDES at (603) 271-2513. To understand your testing results and see testing recommendations specific to your well water, go to the [NHDES Be Well Informed](#) website. Keep records of your water tests for future reference.

If any water tests indicate contaminants at levels of concern, use the Be Well Informed online tool or call NHDES at (603) 271-2513 to discuss treatment recommendations. *The most important step you can take for drinking water safety is to make an informed decision about treatment based on the results of testing done by an accredited laboratory.*

Even if your last water test was satisfactory, changing conditions can affect your water quality. Regular testing can help detect problems early, and establish a record of your water supply quality.

## **Other Recommendations**

### **Minimize Lead Levels in the Water You Use for Food and Beverage Preparation**

Instruct staff to run the water first thing in the morning to clear out water that has been standing in the plumbing overnight. Also, water from your water heater is more likely to have high levels of lead. Use cold water to prepare food and beverages. For hot beverages, heat water from the cold tap on the stove or in a microwave oven. Clean debris from faucet screens frequently.

### **Share Information with Families**

If your facility is served by a community public water system, post the annual water quality report in your center or otherwise share it with families. If you have your water tested, post the most recent results or otherwise share them with families. To show that you are concerned about the safety of the water the children drink, provide copies of NHDES’ private well testing flyer to families who use private wells at home. You can obtain copies of “What’s in Your Water” by calling NHDES at (603) 271-2513.

### **Well Construction and Protection**

Well drillers and well pump installers are licensed and regulated by NHDES. Make sure that anyone who works on your well is licensed to do so. Also, perform a well check-up each spring to ensure that the well cover is in good shape and you are taking steps to prevent contamination of the well. For a well check-up checklist, search the internet for “NHDES checklist inspecting well” or call (603) 271-2513.

### **Prevent Contamination of Your Well**

In addition to keeping the well itself in good shape, keep in mind that what is in or on the ground near the well can affect the water that you take from the well. Focus on the area within 100 feet of your well. In this area, avoid: compost or manure piles; storing or applying chemicals, pesticides, or herbicides; parking motor vehicles; fueling yard equipment; and stockpiling snow removed from roads or parking lots treated with salt. If you have a septic system, make sure that it’s well maintained.

### **If You Use Bottled Water**

Bottled water is regulated by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and by a number of state authorities. In New Hampshire, bottled water facilities are licensed and inspected by NHDHHS, which also reviews testing results for in-state bottled water and beverages to determine compliance with New Hampshire and federal standards for quality and safety. FDA’s standards for bottled water quality generally mirror the federal drinking water standards, although the testing information that FDA requires bottlers to provide to consumers is less than what is required of public water systems. More information can be found on some bottlers’ websites and some state health agency websites, or by contacting NHDHHS at (603) 271-4673.

**For More Information**

Please contact the Drinking Water and Groundwater Bureau at (603) 271-2513 or [dwgbinfo@des.nh.gov](mailto:dwgbinfo@des.nh.gov) or visit [des.nh.gov](http://des.nh.gov)

Note: This fact sheet is accurate as of June 2019. Statutory or regulatory changes or the availability of additional information after this date may render this information inaccurate or incomplete.