



Fact Sheet

Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board Free Drinking Water Testing Program

The Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board is sponsoring free, voluntary drinking water sampling for residents in the Central Coast who get their drinking water from a private or shared groundwater well. This program is intended to help inform residents who don't get their drinking water from a public water system about the safety of their drinking water.

Most rural residents get their drinking water from shallow private domestic or shared groundwater wells that are susceptible to contamination from various sources. These wells are not typically required to be tested or comply with safe drinking water standards. Available information indicates that groundwater in areas of the Central Coast Region may contain unsafe levels of [nitrate](#), [arsenic](#) or other compounds.

The Water Board, US EPA, and local health agencies recommend that residents who don't get their water from a public water system have their drinking water tested annually by a [certified laboratory](#) to make sure it is safe.

How to Tell If You Are on a Private Well

If you or your landlord receive bills and annual [consumer confidence reports](#) (i.e., water quality reports) from a water provider, you get your water from a public water system. If you don't get bills and consumer confidence reports from a water provider, you're on a private or shared well, and it is your responsibility to ensure your water is safe to drink. Information and guidance about private or shared wells is available at the State Water Board's Groundwater Ambient Monitoring and Assessment (GAMA) Program website:

http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/gama/well_owners.shtml

Nitrate Poses a Public Health Risk

Available information indicates nitrate levels in groundwater exceed the public health standard in large areas of the Central Coast, particularly in rural agricultural areas. The [public health standard](#) for nitrate is 10 milligrams per liter (mg/L or parts per million [ppm]) as nitrogen. Drinking water with nitrate levels in excess of the public health standard pose an acute health risk to infants under the age of six and pregnant women because it can interfere with the ability of red blood cells to carry oxygen, resulting in a condition called methemoglobinemia ("blue baby syndrome"). Research has also identified potential links between nitrate consumption and certain types of cancer, such as non-Hodgkin's lymphoma and colorectal, gastric, bladder and ovarian cancer. Please contact your doctor or local county health department if you have any health related questions.



Steps to Take if Your Water Has Too Much Nitrate

If you suspect your drinking water contains unsafe levels of nitrate, don't drink it, cook with it, or use it to make baby formula. **Boiling your drinking water will not remove nitrate – it will increase the nitrate concentration and associated risks.** In addition, water softeners and filtering devices do not reduce nitrate in drinking water.

Treatment technologies that remove nitrate include reverse osmosis, ion exchange and distillation. A list of Certified Residential Water Treatment Devices for various contaminants, including nitrate, is available on the State Water Board's Division of Drinking Water website:

http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/drinking_water/certlic/device/watertreatmentdevices.shtml

For more information regarding nitrate and other contaminants of concern (COCs) go to the following State Water Board's Groundwater Ambient Monitoring and Assessment (GAMA) Program website:

http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/gama/resources.shtml#coc

Services That Will Be Provided with the Free Testing Program

The free testing is focused on the two groundwater contaminants most commonly found in public water system wells statewide, [nitrate](#) and [arsenic](#), in addition to various general minerals and physical parameters. Testing for various pesticides and/or [1,2,3-trichloropropane](#) (1,2,3-TCP), [hexavalent chromium](#) (chrome- or chromium-6 [or VI]) and [perchlorate](#) may also be available in certain areas. The results will be provided to participating residents along with [A Guide for Private Domestic Well Owners](#) that includes information regarding recommended water quality testing, how to interpret the results, what to do if the well is contaminated, and how to protect the well from contamination. Additional information will be provided regarding the availability of free replacement water programs (see below for more information). Spanish versions of the materials will be provided to participants as needed. Your personal information and the location of your well will be kept confidential while making the test results available on the State Water Board's [GeoTracker GAMA information system](#).

Availability of Free Drinking Water Replacement Programs

Free bottled drinking water is currently available to qualified residents in portions of the Salinas Valley through April 2018. For information about the program and how to apply go to:

https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/salinas_valley

For more information or to schedule your free testing

- scan the QR Code on the right with your cellphone
- go to the following website: <https://sites.google.com/view/ccgroundwater>
- or call (844) 613-5152



Note: focused outreach and testing will be implemented in phases by local area.