



Drinking Water
Guidance for Early
Education and Care
Facilities with
Private Wells

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Massachusetts Department
of Environmental Protection
Drinking Water Program



Purpose of this Document

This MassDEP guidance is intended to assist early education and care facilities (EECFs) in Massachusetts with compliance of drinking water standards required for licensing or re-licensing. It applies to EECFs that serve less than 25 people and get their water from a private well, not a public water system (PWS).

If your EECF gets its water from a PWS please see our guidance for EECFs using PWS water at: www.mass.gov/doc/drinking-water-guidance-for-early-education-and-care-facilities-connected-to-a-public-water.

Please be aware that even though MassDEP does not regulate private wells and the water in EECFs are regulated by the Department of Early Education and Care, this guidance will help to ensure that the water you provide is tested for the same contaminants as public water systems. Any additional aspects of drinking water safety can be addressed by your local board of health or health department.

For specific requirements for EECFs see: <https://www.mass.gov/lists/department-of-early-education-and-care-eec-laws-and-regulations>.

For a list of local health departments see: <https://mhoa.com/municipal-links/>

Water Quality Testing Recommendations

If your facility uses a private well, MassDEP recommends that you have the water tested according to MassDEP's recommendations for all private wells (See Table on next page).

Why Should You Test the Water?

You need to test the water to know what is in it. Many contaminants are odorless and tasteless. Your facility is also serving water to children, a very vulnerable population. For information on testing recommendations, visit <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/protect-your-family-a-guide-to-water-quality-testing-for-private-wells>.

Table: MassDEP Recommended Sampling*

Contaminants	Recommended Testing Frequency
Coliform Bacteria Nitrate/Nitrite	Monitor initially and then at a minimum once every year.
Arsenic Chloride Fluoride Hardness Iron Manganese pH Radon Sodium VOCs- Volatile Organic Compounds SOCs- Synthetic Organic Compounds	Monitor initially and then at a minimum once every ten years.
Lead Copper	Monitor initially and then at a minimum once every three years or when there are plumbing changes. Unlike sampling for other contaminants listed- collect individual samples from all taps/fixtures used for drinking, cooking, or taking medication.
Gross Alpha Screen (bedrock wells only)	Test only if you have a bedrock well. Monitor initially and then at a minimum once every ten years.
Unregulated Contaminants	Recommended once every ten years. Some unregulated contaminants like Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) may cause a variety of health effects including developmental effects in infants. Therefore, MassDEP recommends testing for any unregulated contaminant specified by MassDEP. See MassDEP website for more information.
<p align="center">*Contact your local Board of Health for further testing requirements* To find your local Board of Health see https://mhoa.com/municipal-links/</p>	

When to Conduct Additional Sampling and Analysis

Testing should be conducted if any one of following situations occur:

- If part of or the entire well system has been replaced
- If a change in water quality is noticed
- If local environmental conditions have changed dramatically (i.e. flooding, land alterations, etc.)

Where to Have Your Water Samples Analyzed

MassDEP recommends the use of a state certified analytical laboratory for all water quality testing and analysis. Local Board of Health requirements may also specify the use of a state certified lab. A searchable list of MassDEP certified labs can be found at:

<https://eeaonline.eea.state.ma.us/DEP/Labcert/Labcert.aspx>.

How to Collect Samples

In most cases, the certified testing laboratories in Massachusetts that provide water testing can arrange to take your water samples (see link above for a list of certified labs).

You can also obtain the necessary bottles and collect your own sample. However, the procedures and bottles for your testing depend on the contaminant you are testing for, so it is necessary to know which test you would like before collecting the samples. Sample bottles, sampling instructions and the forms to submit water samples are available at each laboratory or you may contact your local Board of Health for assistance.

Samples should be collected from the kitchen or bathroom sink.

For more information regarding sampling procedures, see US Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) guidance on sample collection at: https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2015-11/documents/drinking_water_sample_collection.pdf and <https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2015-06/documents/NE-States-Sample-Collection-Manual.pdf>.

Tools to Assist You to Review Your Analytical Results

To better understand your testing results, visit the **Be Well Informed (BWI) tool** on the MassDEP website: <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/understanding-my-laboratory-results>. This online tool hosted by EPA allows you to enter your water quality lab results and obtain information regarding any contaminant concentrations that exceed MassDEP or federal standards or guidelines that exist for public drinking water. The tool also provides information about any potential health risks and recommended water treatment options.

OTHER HELPFUL RECOMMENDATIONS

Use of Cold and Fresh Water. Only 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.** Instruct staff to **run the water first thing in the morning or after periods of low or no flow** to flush and clear out water that has been standing in the plumbing overnight. See Flushing information at <https://www.mass.gov/doc/lead-and-copper-best-practices/download> and at <https://www.mass.gov/doc/massdep-building-flushing-information/download>

Well Construction and Protection

Well drillers are licensed and regulated by MassDEP. 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. MassDEP recommends to facilities that are seeking licensing or relicensing that they confirm that their well has a Well Completion Report on file with the MassDEP Well Driller Program and meets any additional MassDEP guidance for private wells. For more information, see <https://www.mass.gov/well-driller-program>.

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: keeping compost or manure piles; storing or applying chemicals, pesticides, or herbicides; parking motor vehicles; fueling yard equipment; 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 state authorities. In Massachusetts, bottled water facilities are licensed by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, which also reviews testing results for bottled water and beverages to determine compliance with Massachusetts 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 at: <https://www.mass.gov/lists/bottled-water>.

Additional Resources

- For more information on private wells: <https://www.mass.gov/private-wells>
- For more information on lead and copper: <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/the-lead-contamination-control-act-lcca>
- MassDEP - Parameters and Testing Frequency for Private Wells: <https://www.mass.gov/files/documents/2016/08/ry/priwells.pdf>
- MassDEP Private Well Guidelines: <https://www.mass.gov/files/documents/2018/07/27/prwellgd.pdf>
- Understanding Your Laboratory Results. Enter your laboratory results, learn about any health concern and recommended treatment options: <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/understanding-my-laboratory-results>

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- PrivateWellClass.org:
Privatewellclass.org is a free service for well owners, and those that work with them, to raise awareness of private well issues and help well owners understand their responsibilities in being a good steward of their well and water source.