



# Water Contaminated with Fecal Bacteria

The frequency of downpours, flooding, and droughts caused by climate change can contaminate drinking water. Excess rain can cause runoff, flooding, or sewer overflow that contaminates well water with harmful fecal bacteria, like E. Coli. The health risks of exposure to contaminated water include gastrointestinal illness, skin and eye irritation and wound infections.

While private wells are regulated by cities and towns, well owners must have private labs regularly test their water to make sure it is suitable for drinking. Get more information through the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection about water quality testing for [private wells](#).

## Who is at higher risk?

- People over 65
- Children under 5
- Pregnant people
- People with compromised immune systems

## What can we do about it?

- Sign up for public health alerts from your city, town, or water supplier
- Avoid contact with floodwater and mud – these may be contaminated by raw sewage
- Follow local “boil water” and other water contamination instructions
- Regularly test private wells for contaminants, especially after flooding
- Repair damaged septic systems as soon as possible

