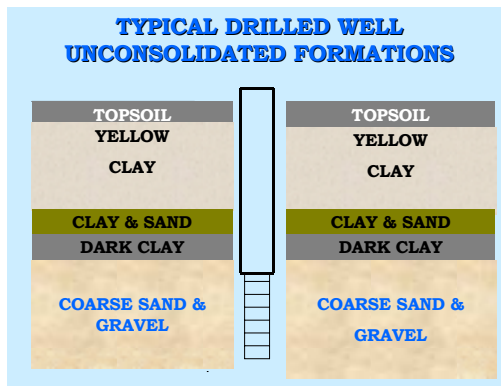
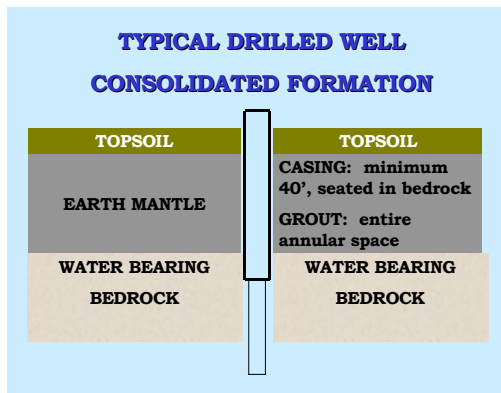


## What is a drilled well?

A well is a hole drilled into the ground (borehole), with the top part lined with plastic or steel pipe, known as casing. The casing keeps the borehole walls from collapsing and prevents surface contaminants from getting into the water supply. The casing also provides a place for a pump and for the pipe that moves water to the surface. Below the casing, the bottom of the borehole may be an open hole in solid bedrock, or it may be screened and gravel-packed, depending upon the conditions of the soil and ground.



## How safe is well water?

Water wells drilled according to State and County code requirements, by a Certified Water Well Contractor, provide a safe and plentiful supply of water for the daily needs of a household. But even with these safeguards, the only way to be sure that your water is free from contaminants is to have it

### Public vs. Private- What's the difference?

The rule of thumb is that if your well provides service to 15 or more connections, serving 25 or more people, it is classified as a "Public" water supply and is regulated by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (IDNR).

## How do I have my water tested?

The Scott County Health Department participates in the Iowa Department of Public Health's Grants to Counties Program. Funded by mandate of the Ground Water Protection act of 1987, grants are made available to provide services that help prevent further contamination of Scott County ground water. This grant allows the Health Department to take a sample of your water at no cost to you. The sample is sent to a state certified laboratory, and the results are then mailed to you. Call the Health Department to set up a time to have your water sampled.

## What will the water be tested for?

Your water will be tested for coliform bacteria and nitrates.

**Coliform bacteria** are a group of bacteria that are found throughout the environment. When you have coliform bacteria in your well water, a pathway exists that has allowed the bacteria to get in. The pathway may be caused by surface water run off, something wrong with the structure of the well, repairs without proper disinfection, or groundwater contamination.

**Nitrogen** is an element that occurs naturally in the environment. All sources of nitrogen are sources of nitrate. There is a potential health risk to infants under one year of age and pregnant or nursing mothers when drinking water that have high amounts of nitrates. This is because high nitrates can reduce how much oxygen the blood can carry and cause "blue-baby" syndrome (or methemoglobinemia).

High nitrate levels (45 mg/l as  $\text{NO}_3$ ) are generally a sign of contamination from major nitrogen sources such as a sewage disposal system, animal manure, or nitrogen fertilizers. Nitrate contamination is more likely to occur in shallow wells or in wells that are poorly placed, constructed, or taken care of.

## *When should I have my water tested?*

The normal recommendation is to test your well water once each year, usually during the spring. It should also be tested after repairing or replacing an old well, pump, or pipes, or after drilling a new well.

You should have your water tested if any of the following occur:

- Family members or houseguests have frequent stomach problems or diarrhea.
- An infant is living in the home.
- You are buying a home and wish to find out about the quality and safety of the water supply.
- You wish to check the efficiency and performance of home water treatment equipment.
- You notice a change in the taste, smell, or look of the water.

## *Choosing a water well contractor. . .*

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources administers a statewide certification program for water well drillers. To become certified, drillers must pass an exam and attend continuing education classes. Choosing a Certified Water Well Contractor is one way of making sure that the job is done by a qualified professional. The Scott County Health Department can provide you with a list of Certified Water Well Contractors.

**Scott County Health Department  
600 W. 4th Street  
Davenport IA 52801-1030**

# What You Need to Know About Your Drinking Water Well



**Scott County Health Department**

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