The AQUIFER

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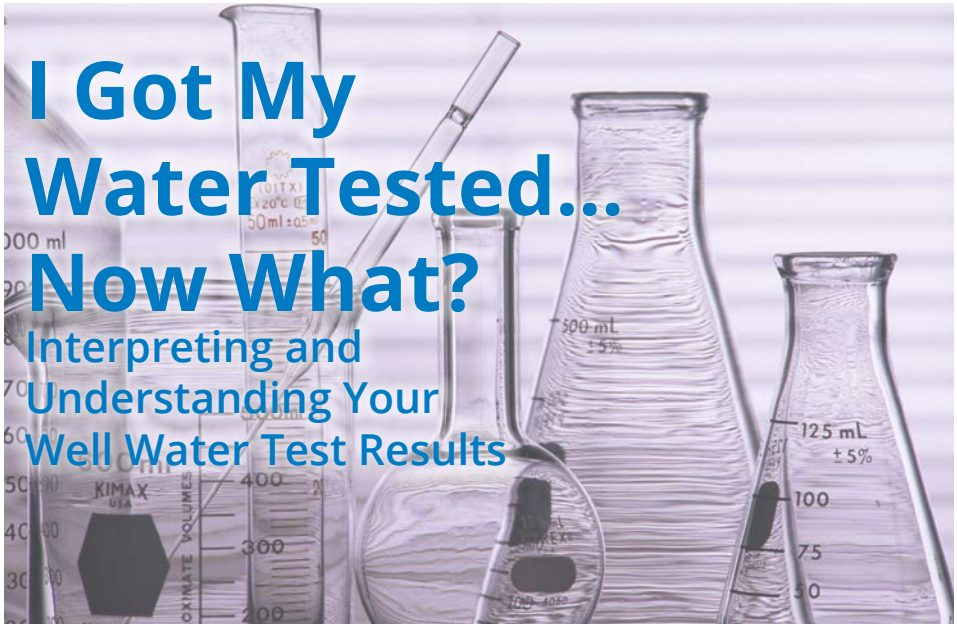


I Got My Water Tested... Now What?

Interpreting and Understanding Your Well Water Test Results

The importance of regular testing of private well water can't be understated. Water well professionals and groundwater managers have preached the importance of regular testing of private well water—at least once a year or more often if an issue is suspected.

Understanding the results can be tricky, especially when you see terms like ppm, mg/L, ppb, µ/L that you may not recognize. Here are some common units of measurement:

- ppm = parts per million
- mg/L = milligrams per liter (one ppm = 1 mg/L)
- ppb = parts per billion
- µ/L = microgram, which = 1/1,000 of a milligram

Water test results generally list the concentration of most minerals in parts per million. Pesticides and other chemicals aren't usually found at concentrations as high as parts per million, so they're listed in parts per billion or micrograms per liter. Compounds other than minerals or pesticides may be listed in other forms of measurement—water hardness is noted as grains per gallon, the corrosion index says if water is corrosive or not corrosive, and bacteria may be listed simply as positive or negative.

OK, But What Do The Amounts Mean?

While the labels and abbreviations may make more sense now, do you really know how much 1 ppm is is? Here are some easier ways to visualize them:

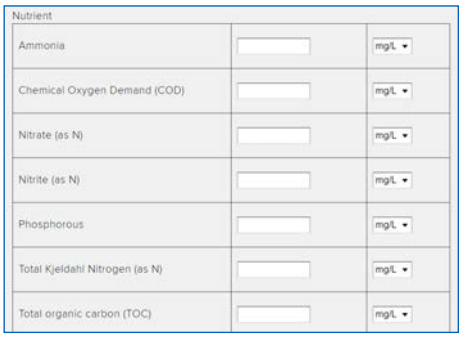
Think of 1 ppm as:
- 1 inch in 16 miles
- 1 minute in 2 years
- 1 cent in $10,000
- 1 bad apple in 2,000 barrels

One ppb compares with:
- 1 inch in 16,000 miles
- 1 second in 32 years
- 1 cent in $10,000,000
- 1 bad apple in 2 million barrels

While these comparisons emphasize how small the amounts being measured are, keep in mind that long-term cumulative exposure to even small amounts of a contaminant may be of concern.

If you have specific questions about your water test results, contact the lab that did the testing or your local health department. You can also use an online tool to enter test results to get simple explanations about the potential health risks, treatment options and more.

Find more information, including finding a certified testing lab in your area and interpreting your test results, at wellowner.org/water-quality/water-testing.



▲ *Online water test interpretation tools, like the one above from Ohio State University (available at https://ohiowatersheds.osu.edu/know-your-well-water/well-water-interpretation-tool) can shed light on water test results.*

Read the entire *Aquifer*