

Free Private Well Water Testing after Floods

In response to recent flooding, the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services will offer free water testing to all impacted residents with private wells.

Water samples will be tested for the presence of coliform bacteria. When coliform bacteria are found in drinking water, it means the water supply is contaminated, and other disease causing bacteria may be there as well.

If coliform bacteria are found, the water sample will also be tested for *E. coli*. If *E. coli* is present, the water has been recently contaminated with human or animal waste and is not safe to drink or use for teeth brushing or cooking. Coliform bacteria and *E.coli* can cause diarrhea and vomiting.

Bacteria can enter a well when floodwater covers the well head or casing. It can also get into the well through

- a leaking septic system,
- surface water leaching into the well,
- runoff from farms ,
- improperly sealed breather pipe,
- improperly sealed wiring entrance,
- missing or faulty gasket on well cap,
- leaky sanitary well seal, or an
- improperly sealed well head that is below ground level.

Well water should be tested at least once a year, and when any of the following occurs:

- The well casing is covered by flood water.
- Someone in the household becomes pregnant.
- There is a change in water smell, taste or color.
- New parts are added to the system, like a new pump, new pipes or a water softener.
- The well runs dry, and then water comes back.
- A water treatment system is added to fix a problem.
- Someone in the household has an unexplained gastrointestinal illness that may be accompanied by vomiting or diarrhea.

Sterile water sample bottles will be available at no cost at the Health Department. Samples should be collected only in the sterile sample bottle and must be returned to the Health Department within 30 hours to ensure valid results.

Water samples will be accepted Monday through Thursday from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm, excluding holidays.

To learn more, call 573-564-2495 or visit us online at www.montgomerycountyhealth.org or on Facebook or Twitter @healthymoco. We love taking care of your family, and work every day to protect, promote and improve health in our community.