

wellcare™ information for you about **Arsenic**

What is ARSENIC?

Arsenic is a naturally occurring mineral found in soil and bedrock. Arsenic works its way into ground water through erosion. Wells that are in or just below large amounts of shale or shaley soil often have higher levels of arsenic in the water.

Arsenic also is widely used to make wood preservatives, paints, dyes, metals, drugs, soaps and semi-conductors, and was once common in pesticides. Manufacturing, farming or simple mishandling of these materials can permit arsenic to enter ground water.

What are the health effects of Arsenic?

Arsenic poisoning can easily go undetected because many of its symptoms point to a number of other illnesses. Health effects from arsenic exposure include skin damage, circulatory system problems and an increased cancer risk, especially of the skin, bladder and lungs. Early warning signs may include stomach pain, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea and numbness in the extremities.

How do I test for Arsenic?

Arsenic in drinking water has no taste or odor. The only way to determine its presence is to have the water tested. The EPA sets a maximum limit for arsenic in public drinking water supplies of 10 parts per billion.

It is particularly important to test regularly for arsenic in areas of concern. Your state's Department of Natural Resources or Geological Survey Office should have information on areas prone to high levels of arsenic.

What are the treatments for Arsenic in drinking water?

You can effectively reduce arsenic levels in drinking water by installing certain water treatment systems at the point of use. These systems may employ reverse osmosis (RO), distillation or cartridge-type removal devices. To make RO devices effective, water may need to be pretreated with chlorine or oxidation.

Water should be tested before and after installation of the treatment device and annually thereafter to confirm effectiveness. *Do not attempt to remove arsenic by boiling water. This only serves to concentrate the contaminant.*

For more information on your ground water

Your local well contractor, health department, cooperative extension service and state environmental or natural resources department can provide more information about ground water in your area. Check the telephone directory or search the web under “water wells” or “government agencies.”

For more information about wells and other wellcare™ publications

wellcare™ is a program of the **Water Systems Council (WSC)**. WSC is a national nonprofit organization dedicated to promote the wider use of wells as modern and affordable safe drinking water systems and to protect ground water resources nationwide.



Contact us at 888-395-1033 or visit www.watersystemscouncil.org

Other wellcare™ publications:

A Consumer's Guide to Water Wells

A Consumer's Guide to Well Testing & Disinfection

wellcare™ Info Sheet: Home Drinking Water Treatment Devices

wellcare™ Info Sheet: Water Quality – arsenic, bacteria, chromium, iron, MTBE (methyl tertiary butyl ether), nitrate, radon, radium, sulfur and TCE (trichloroethylene)

Other organizations you may want to contact:

Water Quality Association	630-505-0160	www.wqa.org
The Ground Water Foundation	800-858-4844	www.groundwater.org
American Ground Water Trust	603-228-5444	www.agwt.org
National Ground Water Association	800-551-7379	www.ngwa.org

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