

wellcare[®] information for you about **Buying a Home with a Well**

Most homebuyers would never consider purchasing a home without a thorough inspection of the structure and its operating systems. The same care must be taken to inspect the property's well system and the quality of its drinking water.

Research the Well's History

A recent water quality test is usually required by home mortgage companies before a buyer can close on a property. But water quality is only one concern. You also need to inspect the mechanical workings of the well system, such as the pump and the condition of the wellhead.

Try to get as much information as possible on the construction, maintenance and condition of the well. Ask the sellers or contact the company that drilled the well for a well log or well history (also known as a water well record or drilling report). Most states require well contractors to file a well log on each new well drilled.

The well log will include a reference number for the well, the well owner at the time of construction, location of the well and various construction details. These can include the drilling method used, the depth of the well, the amount and type of casing, the size and type of screen, and the type of pump. Ask for any records of maintenance and inspection of the well system after construction.

You should also request a copy of any water quality tests taken in years after the well was drilled. Most states encourage homeowners to test their well water once a year, usually in the spring. If the homeowner doesn't have records, check with the well driller or the local health department for water test results.

Review the Well's Condition

The well log should help you determine the location, age and condition of the well. There are other aspects of your new well to consider. The list below includes the most positive conditions for the well on your new property.

Well Location

- **Proximity to pollution sources** – the well is uphill from pollution sources, such as the septic tank and septic field. Surface water doesn't reach or is diverted from the well.
- **Distance from pollution sources** – the well is at least 100 feet away from potential pollution sources and meets or exceeds all state minimum requirements for distance. Check with your local health department for standards.
- **Soil type** – the soil is fine-textured, like clay loams, or silty clay. This is the best soil type to filter impurities before ground water reaches your well.
- **Subsurface conditions** – the water table or fractured bedrock are deeper than 20 feet, which permits plenty of filtering.

Well Construction and Maintenance:

- **Age** – the well is less than 20 years old.
- **Well type** – it is a drilled well.
- **Casing height** – the lining of the well (the casing) is 12 or more inches above the land surface. In flood prone areas, the casing is one to two feet above the highest recorded flood level. This ensures that no substances can wash into your well.
- **Condition of casing and well cap** – no holes or cracks are visible, the cap is tightly attached and a screened vent faces the ground.
- **Casing depth** – the casing extends 50 or more feet below the land surface.
- **Backflow protection** – measures are taken to prevent backflow (reverse flow in water pipes) and, where necessary, anti-backflow devices are installed.
- **Well inspection** – the well was inspected within the last 10 years and records are available.

If you still have questions about the condition of the well, contact your well professional about further well inspection, water testing and the need for well repair or replacement. If you are new to the community, ask your real estate agent, neighbors or local health department to recommend several well professionals for you to contact. A well professional can also help you schedule future inspection, maintenance and testing to keep your new well system operating at peak capacity.

For more information on home buying and well inspection

*Home*A*Syst: An Environmental Risk-Assessment Guide for the Home* (Natural Resource, Agriculture and Engineering Service (NRAES) and the Regents of the University of Wisconsin System, 1997) can be found in the reference section of many public libraries or ordered from NRAES at www.nraes.org or 607-255-7604. A single copy costs \$11.50, including shipping and handling.

For more information on your drinking water

The following sites provide up-to-date information on efforts to protect public water supplies and steps you can take as a private well owner:

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| The Groundwater Foundation | www.groundwater.org |
| U.S. Environmental Protection Agency | www.epa.gov/safewater |
| American Groundwater Trust | www.agwt.org |
| National Ground Water Association | www.wellowner.org |

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



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