

wellcare[®] information for you about Protecting Your Wellhead

The most visible portion of your drinking water system is the wellhead, the structure built over your well to protect its various parts. By protecting your wellhead, you will ensure the quality of your drinking water supply.

Maintain Your Wellhead

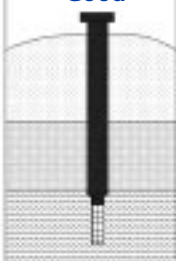
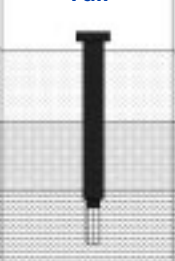
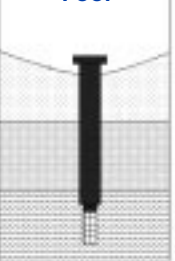
The wellhead protects the well casing, which is the lining of the well, and the well cap, which provides a tight-fitting seal at the top of the well. The wellhead is your first line of defense to prevent pollutants from penetrating your drinking water system. Inspect regularly to make sure these elements are in good condition.

To keep your well safe, hire a certified well professional to perform any new well construction or modification, or to close an old well.

Take care when working or mowing around your well. It is easy to damage the wellhead with heavy equipment, which will jeopardize the sanitary protection of your well, permitting contaminants to enter the water supply. Don't pile snow, leaves or other materials around the well, where they can carry pollutants into the system.

When landscaping around your well or siting a new well, make sure the top of the well sits at least one foot above the ground. Slope the ground down and away from your well for proper drainage.

Well Location & Surface Drainage

Good	Fair	Poor
		

Good: The well is high in the landscape so surface water drains away from the wellhead; little chance for contamination.

Fair: The well is on level ground; moderate chance for contamination by surface runoff.

Poor: The well is poorly located on the landscape; surface water runoff may move toward the well with a high chance for contamination.

Chart reprinted with permission from *BMPs for Wellhead Protection*, by R.L. Mahler and K.A. Loeffelman, Soil Sciences Division, University of Idaho, Moscow, Idaho.

Ensure Clean Drinking Water

Some common household activities can actually threaten the quality of your drinking water. Even small spills of pesticides, fertilizers or fuels near your well can seep into the ground and contaminate the water.

Try to avoid mixing or using pesticides, fertilizers, herbicides, degreasers, fuels or other pollutants within 100 feet of your well. When siphoning water for these tasks, be careful to avoid back-flow back into the well system.

Conduct a quick visual check for activities that might threaten to enter your drinking water system at or near the wellhead. Look for the following within about 100 feet from the wellhead: septic tanks, lateral fields, cesspools, pit privy; chemical storage areas, machinery maintenance areas, waste piles, lagoons, sewers; underground storage tanks for chemicals, fertilizers, or petroleum products, above-ground tanks for chemicals, fertilizers or petroleum products; animal pens or feedlots and manure storage areas.

If your existing well is located near these activities, you may need to test your water quality and disinfect your well more often than once a year. Try to move the risky activities away from your well.

You should also inspect and pump septic systems on your property as often as recommended by your local health department, usually at three to five year intervals. Failing septic systems can leach contaminants into the water supply.

For more information on protecting your wellhead

The University of Idaho water quality brochure includes a section on best management practices to protect your wellhead, www.uidaho.edu/wq/wqbr/wqbr30.html. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency brochure, *Drinking Water from Private Wells*, includes a section on protecting your ground water supply, www.pueblo.gsa.gov/cic_text/health/house-wells/t_wells.htm

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:

The Groundwater Foundation	www.groundwater.org
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency	www.epa.gov/safewater
American Groundwater Trust	www.agwt.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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