



MERRIMAC BOARD OF HEALTH Private Well Water Testing

Arsenic has been recently discovered in well water samples within Merrimac.

To the best of our knowledge this does not affect those residents with “Town Water” but may affect those residents whose drinking water supply comes from private wells. Arsenic (chemical symbol As) occurs naturally in soil and bedrock in many parts of the United States, including parts of Massachusetts. Activities that could have left arsenic residuals include apple orchard spraying, coal ash disposal, and use of some pressure treated wood. Arsenic has no smell, taste, or color when dissolved in water, even in high concentrations, and therefore only laboratory analysis can determine the presence and concentration of arsenic in water.

The Merrimac Board of Health recommends that if you have a private well that you test for arsenic. The cost for a homeowner to test for arsenic at a Massachusetts lab may range from \$20 to \$100. Arsenic concentrations are often reported in milligrams of arsenic per liter of water (a liter is about a quart). The current drinking water standard is 0.010 mg/l or parts per million (ppm). This is equivalent to 10 ug/l or 10 parts per billion (ppb).

How do I know if my water has arsenic?

You may choose to use one of the sources below, or find your own testing facility, or you may choose not to test at all. However, the Merrimac Board of Health recommends testing. Not every lab tests for arsenic. Be sure that the lab you choose confirms that they indeed perform arsenic testing for private well owners. Although we cannot recommend one laboratory over another, of the many labs we contacted, most would perform the testing only commercially. One company however did offer private well testing for \$20 plus shipping: Microbac Laboratories in Worcester

What about bathing/showering or other uses?

Unless your arsenic level is over 500 ppb, showering, bathing and other household uses are safe. Arsenic is not easily absorbed through the skin and does not evaporate into the air

Sources for water testing:

Microbac http://www.microbac.com/about/location_mass.html Tel. 508 595 0010

<http://www.filterwater.com/p-209-arsenic-quick-test-kit.aspx>

http://ntllabs.com/Merchant2/merchant.mvc?Screen=AFLP&Store_Code=NTL&Affiliate=interpro63

<http://www.water-research.net/watertesting.htm>

[http://culliganwaterservice.com/?ca\[kw\]=water%20testing&ca\[mp\]=GOOGLE&cb\[xp\]=culligan_rental&ca\[ag\]=nonbranded_water_analysis&ca\[mt\]=broad&ca\[cr\]=4998993025](http://culliganwaterservice.com/?ca[kw]=water%20testing&ca[mp]=GOOGLE&cb[xp]=culligan_rental&ca[ag]=nonbranded_water_analysis&ca[mt]=broad&ca[cr]=4998993025)

<http://www.vitasalus.com/store/product/list.asp?Opt=sch&Qry=part-wtr-as>

What can I do if my water has high arsenic levels?

If the arsenic level in your well water is above 10 ppb, there are a number of treatment methods available. However, before selecting a treatment method there is a number of factors that need to be considered.

Some variations can easily be removed with filtration systems costing as little as a few hundred dollars while other forms of arsenic may require a more advanced filtration system running in the thousands of dollars. Determining if you have arsenic in your drinking water and what variation is the first step.

If you have further questions please check the MDEP or Merrimac Board of Health website on arsenic, or contact the Board of Health.

<http://www.mass.gov/dep/water/drinking/arswell.htm>

<http://www.merrimac01860.info/Pages/index>

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