

# Well Water Testing

Have you tested your water lately? To help ensure water is safe, Public Health Ontario offers water-quality testing for bacteria.

How to get your well water tested

1. Pick up an empty water sampling bottle and form from the Mulmur Township Office or a participating Public Health office.
2. Follow the instructions provided with the sampling bottle to take your sample and fully complete the form that accompanies the bottle.
3. Drop off the sample at one of the Public Health locations listed on the pamphlet below. The drop-off times below ensure your sample makes it to the testing lab in Hamilton on time.

For more information, visit the [Wellington Dufferin Guelph Public Health website](#)



## Avoid contamination. Take care of your well.

### Make sure the:

- Well cap fits tightly and is in good condition
- Well head is clear of brush, debris, and other obstructions
- Casing is at least 40 cm (16 in.) above the ground
- Joints, cracks, and connections in the well casing are sealed
- Vent openings are facing down and screened to keep insects and mice out
- Ground is mounded around the well casing to divert water away

## Bottle pickup & drop-off

### Public Health locations and schedule

#### Guelph

160 Chancellors Way

Monday to Thursday: 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Friday: before 12:30 p.m.

#### Fergus

474 Wellington Rd 18

Suite 100, RR #1

Monday to Thursday: 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Friday: before 11 a.m.

#### Orangeville

180 Broadway

Monday to Thursday: 8:30 a.m. - 3 p.m.

#### Shelburne

Mel Lloyd Centre

167 Centre St

Entrance "C" (upstairs, outside elevator)

Monday and Wednesday only: before 11:30 a.m.

*Bottles can also be picked up at township  
municipal offices.*



# Well Water

## Put it to the Test



For private homeowners

# Play it safe when it comes to your drinking water.

Be sure to test your water regularly and take care of your well.

## What should I test my water for?

Public Health will arrange for testing bacteria, but not chemical substances. Testing for bacteria is free.

If you suspect that you might have chemical problems, send a water sample to a private, accredited lab. The Ontario Ministry of the Environment can help you find an accredited private lab near you.

## Why should I test for bacteria?

Test your well water for bacteria at least three times every year. Harmful bacteria may be in your drinking water. These bacteria can make you sick with stomach cramps, diarrhea, and other problems.



## How do bacteria get into my water supply?

Total coliform are found in animal wastes and sewage, but are also found in soil and on vegetation. If you have total coliform in your well water, it's usually the result of surface water run-off entering the well. This is common during times of heavy rain or when the snow melts. These bacteria do not usually make you sick.

Faecal coliform/*E. coli* are found in the digestive systems of people and animals. If you have *E. coli* in your well water, it's usually the result of recent sewage contamination from a nearby source, such as a septic system, animal barn, or farm. These bacteria will make you sick.

## How do I test my water?

Pick up a water sampling kit from Public Health or your township office. The kit contains a water bottle and detailed instructions. **Be sure to follow the instructions carefully.**

Check the locations and schedule for picking up and dropping off your sample at Public Health (see back of brochure).

## Where are the samples tested?

Public Health sends the water sample to be tested at a Regional Public Health Laboratory in London or Hamilton, Ontario.

## How do I get my result?

The laboratory will have your result four to five business days after you drop off your sample at Public Health. Your sample kit contains information about the laboratory and getting your result. If you need help interpreting your result, you can contact a public health inspector at WDG Public Health. Call 1-800-265-7293 ext. 4753.

## What if my well water is unsafe?

In the short term, stop using the well water. If you want to make it safe to use, bring it to a rolling boil for at least one minute. Cool the water and be sure to store it in your refrigerator. To remove the flat taste, you can stir or shake it occasionally. Or, instead of boiling your water, you can add 1.25 mL (¼ teaspoon) of liquid household bleach (e.g., Javex) to 4½ L of water. Mix well and let it stand for 15 minutes.

## When should I test my water again?

Call Public Health to discuss appropriate action.

## How do I disinfect my well?

If your lab result shows that your water is unsafe, you will need to disinfect your well. For convenience, it's best to treat your well in the evening.

1. Draw enough water for overnight use.
2. By-pass treatment devices if you have them.
3. Make disinfectant by mixing chlorine/household bleach with several litres of water.

### Type of well Amounts of chlorine/bleach and water

Dug well	1 L of bleach for every 1.5 m (5 ft.) of water*
Drilled well	170 mL of bleach for every 7.5 m (25 ft.) of water*

\*If you're unsure of the depth of your well, add 2 L of bleach.

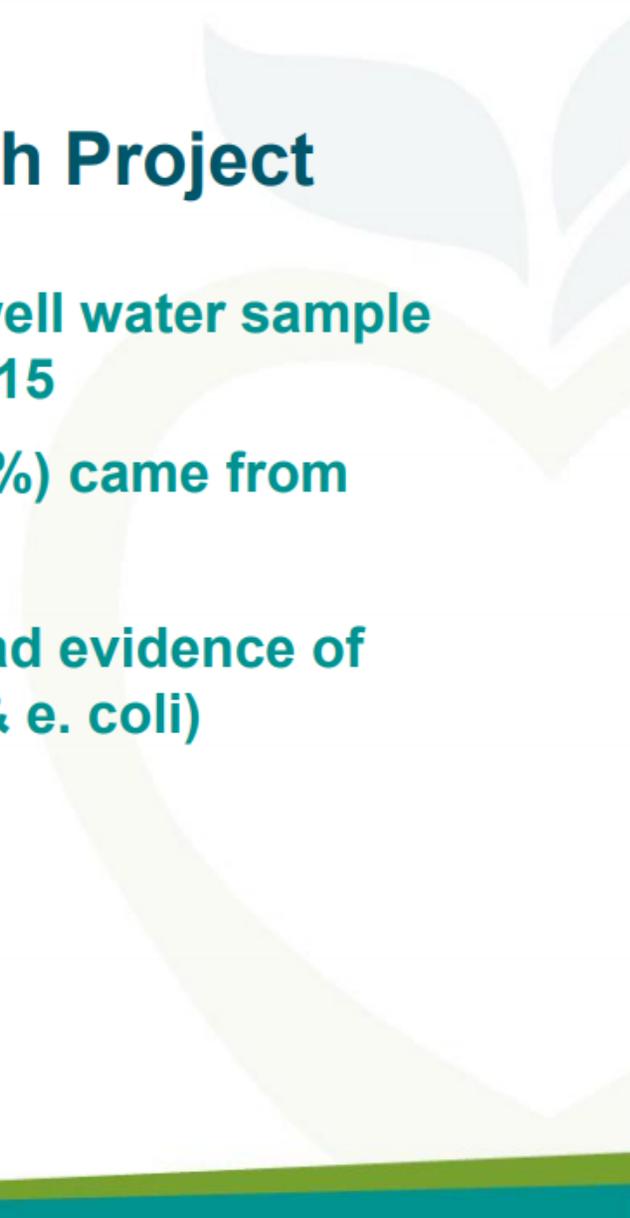
4. Pour the disinfectant down your well. The vent hole in a drilled well may be a good place to pour in the disinfectant.
5. Turn on each tap—inside and outside your house—one at a time. Let the water run until you smell a strong odour of chlorine. If you can't smell chlorine, add more to the well.
6. Let the chlorinated water stay in the plumbing system for at least 12 hours. Do not run any water at this time.
7. Starting from outside, flush the system to remove chlorine one tap at a time. This order will reduce the load on your septic system.
8. Let each faucet run until there is no longer a strong odour of chlorine.
9. Wait a minimum of 48 hours and sample again.

Health Promotion and Protection

# **WELL WATER TESTING IN DUFFERIN**



## Well Water Research Project

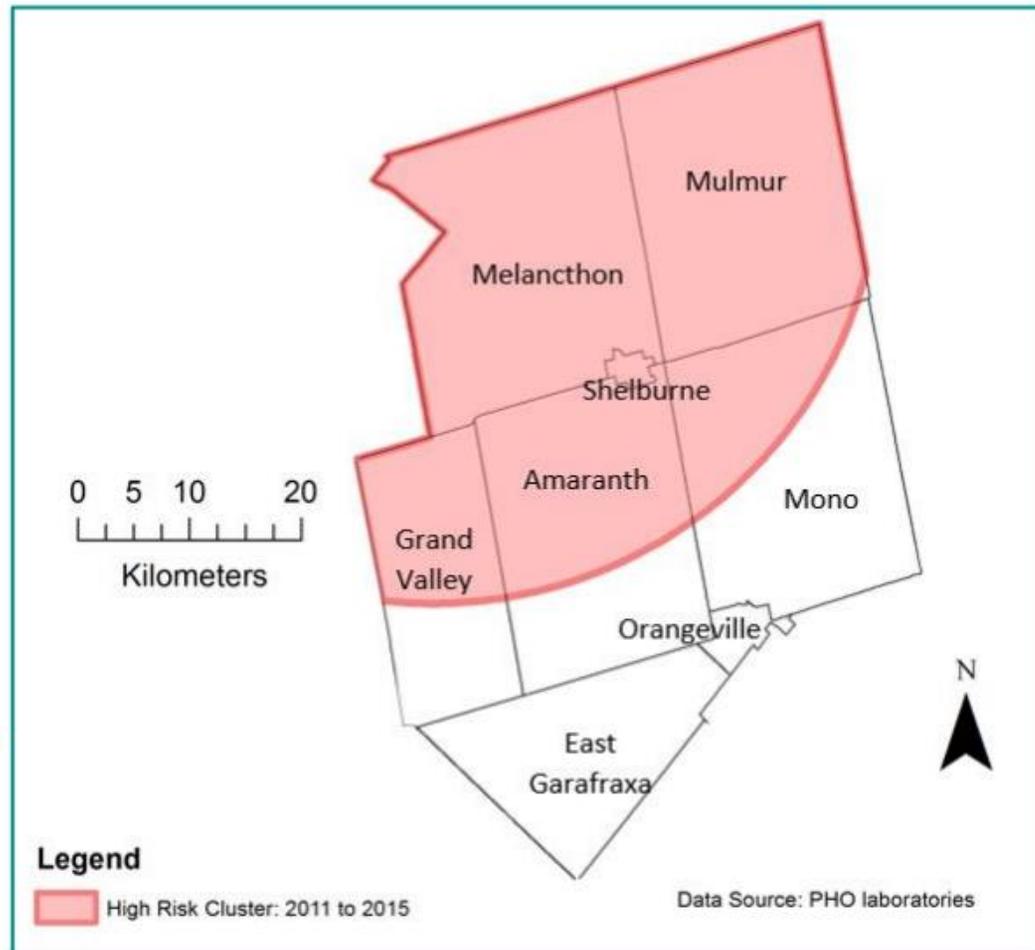


- **Public Health analyzed private well water sample results submitted from 2011 - 2015**
- **Of the 31,593 results, 10,304 (33%) came from Dufferin**
- **21% of samples from Dufferin had evidence of bacterial contamination (TC >5 & e. coli)**

### High risk cluster for bacterial contamination 2011-2015

A geographic cluster of contaminated samples was detected in north and central Dufferin between 2011 and 2015.

Public health is working to identify potential causes of increased contamination in this area.



### Average rate of existing wells sampled annually in Dufferin

Only 15% of Dufferin residents with private wells tested their water in a given year.

Public health is planning strategies to increase sampling among well owners.

