

Health
District

Disinfecting a Water Well

A coliform bacterium is an organism used as a test indicator to determine unsanitary conditions in food and water. The water from your well tested positive for coliform bacteria indicating an unsanitary condition. If the source of the contamination is within the well casing or your household plumbing system, chlorine bleach may eliminate the bacteria. Once the disinfection process has begun you will not be able to use the water in your house for 12 to 24 hours. You will need to make alternative plans for your water needs during this period of time.

Materials you will need to disinfect your water well: Three (3) gallons of 5.25% unscented household chlorine bleach, a garden hose attached to an outside water faucet long enough to reach your water well casing, old clothes, rubber gloves, and eye protection. For an un-removable well cap you will need a wrench to fit the threaded plug on top and a funnel. Chlorine test strips are optional.

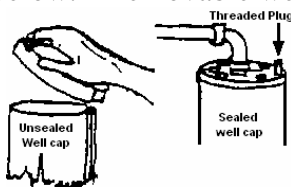


Caution: Chlorine bleach stains clothes and is caustic to human skin, eyes, and lungs. Always wear old clothes and gloves while handling bleach. Wear eye protection in case of splashing. If a chlorine smell persists in enclosed areas you should ventilate the area to protect your lungs from exposure to gas and prevent a possible explosion from chlorine gas build-up.



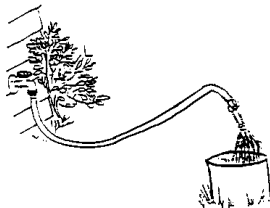
Read these instructions completely and then follow the steps to disinfect your water well.

1. Turn off the hot water tank to prevent a possible explosion from chlorine gas build-up.
2. Determine the type of well cap installed on your water well. An un-removable or sealed well cap will have piping through the top of the cap and a threaded plug, similar to the illustration below. A removable well cap will be a simple cap with no piping.

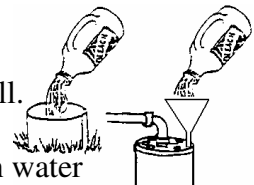


3. If you have an un-removable cap, remove the threaded plug with the wrench and insert the funnel in the hole. If the well cap is removable, simply remove the cap.

4. Pour two (2) gallons of chlorine bleach in the funnel or directly into the well.



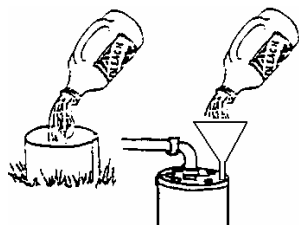
5. Connect the hose to an outside faucet and run water into the well until you can smell the chlorine.



6. Turn off the outside water faucet to the hose.

7. Begin with the faucet closest to the water storage tank and work to the farthest faucet in the house. Open the cold water faucet and allow the water to run until you smell chlorine or until a chlorine test strip held under the water indicates the presence of chlorine. Open the hot water faucet and allow the water to run until you smell chlorine or until a chlorine test strip held under the water indicates the presence of chlorine.

8. Move to the next closest water faucet and repeat step #7. Repeat this process until you have detected chlorine smell or chlorine test strips indicate chlorine at every faucet in your house.
9. Flush the toilets until you detect the smell of chlorine or until a chlorine test strip indicates the presence of chlorine in the water.



10. Pour another gallon of chlorine bleach in the funnel or directly into the well.

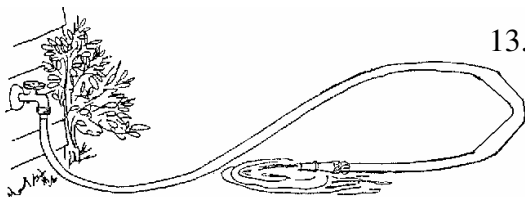
11. Thread the plug back into the cap of an un-removable well cap or put the removable well cap back on.



12. Wait 12 to 24 hours before continuing the next step. If you can wait the full 24 hours, the chlorine bleach will be more effective in killing the coliform bacteria in your water system.



Caution: Do not use the water for any reason. It contains chlorine that is caustic to humans and animals.



13. Turn on the outside water faucet allowing the water to discharge to the surface of the ground or to a drainage ditch through the hose. Allow the water to run until the chlorine smell dissipates or until a chlorine test strip indicates that the chlorine is no longer in the water.

14. Turn off the outside water faucet to the hose.

15. Turn on your hot water tank.

You have completed disinfecting your water well. Please allow 7 to 10 days for the chlorine in your water system to completely purge because chlorine in the water will invalidate a water test. During this period you can use your water for everyday use, but we suggest that you not drink the water at this time. After waiting 7 to 10 days, please contact our office between 8:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. weekdays to schedule a water test. We require two consecutive safe samples tests over the next two weeks before we can confidently say your water is safe for human and animal use.

PLEASE NOTE: Disinfecting the water well is no assurance that the water entering the well is free of chemical pollution. If your water tests positive for coliform bacteria after this process, it may indicate another source of contamination. If this is the case you will need to contact a registered private water well contractor to consider water treatment options and equipment.

If you do not feel confident in performing the disinfecting process described, the Health District recommends that you contact a registered private water well contractor to assist in disinfecting your water well. A printed list of registered water well contractors is available at our office or on our Web site at <http://www.geaugacountyhealth.org> under publications.

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