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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Protect Your Groundwater Day: Get your annual well checkup**

**Eau Claire, WI – September 4<sup>th</sup>, 2018** – Just as you have regular checkups with your doctor for your health, you also need a regular checkup for your private well! To celebrate Protect Your Groundwater Day, the Eau Claire City-County Health Department is offering **\$9 savings for those who pick up a private well nitrate sample kit and return it to the Health Department before September 6<sup>th</sup>.**

Safe, clean water is important for drinking, cooking, bathing, and cleaning. City water systems test their water regularly to make sure it is safe, but it is up to private well owners to test their well water. Well checkups should be done each year or if there is a change in color, taste, or smell.



**Why do I need a checkup for my well?**

How we use land, such as for housing or farming, can affect the quality of our water. Nitrate is a common pollutant in Eau Claire County and can enter our water through leaky septic systems or runoff from lawns or farm fields. Across Wisconsin, about 1 in 5 wells in farmed areas may be over the safe level of nitrate in water. In Eau Claire County, this means up to 1,800 private wells may have unsafe drinking water. “Private wells in subdivisions with septic systems in heavily farmed areas have the greatest chance of nitrate pollution,” says Audrey Boerner, Environmental Sciences Project Manager. “Yearly well checkups can identify pollution that can make us sick.”

**How do high levels of nitrate make us sick?**

Nitrate levels above 10 parts per million are most harmful for pregnant women and infants. Infants ages 0 to 6 months can get sick with an illness called “blue baby syndrome” after drinking water with high nitrate, such as water mixed in formula. Nitrate may also hurt a developing fetus during pregnancy and pregnant livestock. Eau Claire County families with a newborn child that live in a home served by a private well can have their water tested for bacteria and nitrate contamination at no cost. Boiling water does not remove nitrate.

Nitrate levels above 2 parts per million may mean there are other pollutants in our water that

can make us sick, such as bacteria, prescription drugs, or other chemicals used on lawns or fields.

**How do I get a well checkup?**

- Pick up a sample bottle from the Eau Claire City-County Health Department. We recommend an annual nitrate and bacteria test.
- Schedule an annual inspection by a local well driller or plumber to check the physical health of your well. Keeping your well in good physical health can help prevent water pollution.

**If your drinking water is unsafe:**

If your well has unsafe levels of nitrate, bacteria, or other pollutants, the Health Department can recommend more tests or treatment options that can improve the safety of your water.

**For more information, visit**

<http://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/drinking/private/wells/disease/nitrate.html>  
<http://www.ci.eau-claire.wi.us/departments/health-department/environmental-health/private-wells>

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Promoting health and safety for all Eau Claire communities