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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Contact:**

Audrey Boerner, MS

Public Health Specialist

715-579-5962

[audrey.boerner@co.eau-claire.wi.us](mailto:audrey.boerner@co.eau-claire.wi.us)

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

**Eau Claire, WI – August 30<sup>th</sup>, 2018** – Groundwater is the primary source of drinking water in Eau Claire County. You can protect our groundwater resource and your family's health by planning a "checkup" for your private well! To celebrate Protect Your Groundwater Day, the Eau Claire City-County Health Department is offering discounted nitrate and bacteria testing for private well samples that are picked up and returned to the Health Department before September 12<sup>th</sup>, with payment. Individual nitrate and bacteria tests are eligible for a \$6 discount. A \$12 savings is available when both tests are returned at the same time.

While city water systems are tested regularly, private well owners are responsible for regularly testing their water. Well checkups should be done each year, if there is a change in color, taste, or smell, or if there is any work being done on your well.



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

Safe, clean water is important for drinking, cooking, bathing, and cleaning. Any type of land use (residential, industrial, or agricultural) can affect the quality of our water. Nitrate is a common pollutant in Eau Claire County and can enter groundwater through leaky septic systems or runoff from lawns or fields. In Eau Claire County, and throughout Wisconsin, as many as 1 in 5 wells may be over the safe level of nitrate in water. "Private wells in subdivisions with septic systems or heavily farmed areas have the greatest chance of nitrate pollution," says Audrey Boerner, Public Health Specialist. "Yearly well checkups can identify pollution and help us protect our drinking water."

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

Nitrate levels above 10 parts per million are most harmful for pregnant women, unborn babies, and infants. High nitrate levels make it harder for our blood to carry the oxygen our bodies need. As a result, infant formula should never be mixed with water containing high nitrate. Nitrate levels above 2 parts per million may also be an indicator of other pollutants in our water, such as bacteria, prescription drugs, or chemicals used on lawns or fields. Boiling water does not remove nitrate.

Eau Claire County families with a pregnant woman or newborn child (under 1 year old) in a home with a private well can have their water tested at no cost.

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

- Pick up a sample bottle from the Eau Claire City-County Health Department. We recommend annual nitrate and bacteria tests.
- 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>

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Promoting health and safety for all Eau Claire communities