



Water Testing Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Q: When can a water sample be submitted?

A: Water samples are accepted Mondays (8 am to 4:15 pm) and Tuesdays (8 to 11:45 am) for bacteriological testing (Sanitary Analysis). Samples for metals analysis (arsenic, manganese, lead, etc.) are accepted Monday-Friday (8 am to 4:15 pm). Samples are not accepted on holidays. Please call before collecting a sample when there is a holiday.

Q: When will the results be ready?

A: The samples are analyzed at another location and the results need to be provided to Anoka County before notification to residents. The typical timeframe for results to be received is about 2 ½ weeks. Once results come in, results will be provided in a written format to residents, so it may end up being a total of 3 weeks, especially in the late spring and summer. If it has been 3 weeks or longer and written results have not been received, Anoka County can be contacted at 763-324-4260 to inquire about the results. Please keep this timeframe in mind when testing for real estate purposes. If results are needed faster, a list of private state-certified labs to contact can be provided (the fee is usually greater).

Q: How much does water testing cost?

A: The Sanitary Analysis (bacteria and nitrate, see below) costs \$30. Each additional sampling parameter (e.g. metal like arsenic, manganese, lead, etc.) costs approximately \$12-18, with the exception of a few more costly parameters. Please call 763-324-4260 for current pricing.

Q: Can samples be collected in a different bottle from home and brought in for testing?

A: No, samples must be collected in the proper sample bottles. Smaller bottles for Sanitary Analysis can be picked up at most City Halls (see next Question) and the Anoka County Government Center. Ramsey and Lino Lakes residents wanting to sample for manganese, and Andover and Oak Grove residents wanting to sample for arsenic, can go to their City Halls. Otherwise, please come to the Government Center to pick up sampling materials for metals testing, as collection instructions and information forms are only kept on hand here. The City Halls (see next Question) will have sample collection instructions and information forms for Sanitary Analysis. **One bottle for each parameter to be tested for is needed** (the Sanitary Analysis counts as one parameter).

Q: Where can sample bottles be picked up?

A: Bottles for Sanitary Analysis can be picked up at the following locations, as well as the Anoka County Government Center (2100 3rd Ave, Suite 600, Anoka):

- Andover City Hall
- Anoka Conservation District (Ham Lake)
- Blaine City Hall
- Bunker Hills Activity Center (Andover)
- Centerville City Hall
- Columbus City Hall
- East Bethel City Hall
- Ham Lake City Hall
- Lino Lakes City Hall
- Linwood Town Hall
- Nowthen City Hall
- Oak Grove City Hall
- Ramsey City Hall
- St. Francis City Hall

Bottles for metals analysis can be picked up at the Government Center, with the exceptions noted in the previous question.

Q: What should private well water be tested for?

A: In general, the Sanitary Analysis is recommended as a “standard test”. If there are any other concerns about the quality of the well water, call 763-324-4260 and ask to speak to a water specialist. They will ask some questions about the well and the water used for drinking. Additional tests may be

recommended.

Q: What is the Sanitary Analysis test?

A: The Sanitary Analysis tests for bacteria and nitrate and costs \$30 through the County. The bacteria test is not quantitative – the results of the test indicate whether coliform organisms are present or absent. The test analyzes for many different coliform organisms, and if one (or multiple) is found, the test will give a “present” result. If none are found, the test will give an “absent” result. Which particular organism(s) were found or how many organisms were found is not known with this test. The exception to this is E.coli – the test will tell whether or not E.coli specifically is positive or negative. If more specific testing is needed, some private state-certified labs may be able to do more detailed testing (at a greater fee). A list of these labs can be provided by Anoka County. The nitrate results are expressed as mg/L of nitrate-nitrogen.

Q: What does it mean if the result of the bacteria test is “present”?

A: This result means that at least one type of coliform organism (bacteria) was found in the water sample. Many coliform organisms are not harmful to health. However, it is still important to follow-up with the appropriate treatment that is recommended with the written results, as any presence of coliform organisms indicates a potential pathway for contaminants to enter the well. Sometimes water build-up over time or standing water can trigger a “present” result, and disinfection is all that is needed. Other times, a “present” result is

triggered because water from the surface is entering the well through a loose well cap or damaged well casing. It is important to take care of this, because if harmless coliform organisms can enter the well, other contaminants can too (e.g. E.coli, lawn fertilizer, etc.). Please call 763-324-4260 and ask to speak to a water specialist for further information or clarification.

Q: Who can checks be made out to?

A: Checks can be made out to Anoka County. Cash and credit/debit card are also accepted.

Q: Is there a list of private testing facilities?

A: Yes, a list can be found on Anoka County's website:
www.anokacounty.us/water.

Q: Are there companies that can come to private homes to inspect the well?

A: Yes, try reaching out to anyone on the list of certified well contractors that can be found on Anoka County's website: www.anokacounty.us/water.

Q: Why would well water smell like rotten eggs?

A: A "rotten egg" taste or smell can be caused by hydrogen sulfide gas. See this link for more information on hydrogen sulfide gas:
<https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/water/wells/waterquality/hydrosulfide.html>. Be sure to note the difference between a "rotten

egg" smell and a metallic smell – a metallic smell could indicate the presence of an elevated level of metals like iron, manganese, zinc, or copper. Call 763-324-4260 and ask to speak to a water specialist for more information.

Q: If well water is brown, could the well be rusted and need to be replaced?

A: Brown water can indicate many different things, including rust, minerals, or sediment. It is likely that the water has an elevated level of iron, so it is recommended to test the water for iron. Elevated levels of iron can be due to a rusted well, but it is more likely to be due to the natural groundwater quality or rusted pipes. Elevated levels of iron are not toxic or poisonous, but substantially elevated levels of iron should be addressed to rule out any complications. Call 763-324-4260 and ask to speak to a water specialist for more information.

Q: Where can residents go for more information on wells and drinking water?

A: Check out www.knowtheflow.us, a water resources management initiative to provide public information and coordination among Anoka County agencies, communities, and water management organizations.

Anoka County
Environmental Services
2100 3rd Avenue STE 600
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