



Infant Formula and Well Water: What caregivers need to know.

Nearly 23% of Oregonians use domestic or private wells as their primary source of drinking water. The owner or user of the well is responsible for finding out about the water quality, and is encouraged to review the Oregon Water Well Owner's Handbook—available in [English](#) and [Spanish](#) online, and in print upon request. For families who use well water to prepare infant formula or infant foods, it is important to understand the safety of your water first. The guidance in this document focuses on infant formula, although the same recommendation applies to infant foods prepared with well water, such as infant cereal.

Should I boil my well water for formula?

It is important to know about well water quality before deciding to boil the water. There could be harmful bacteria, chemicals or minerals in your well water. Boiling will remove certain bacteria but **will not** remove chemicals or minerals. Boiling the water may even increase the concentration of potentially dangerous chemicals, such as nitrates, sulfate, certain bacterial toxins and sodium.

Should I have my well water tested?

If your family prepares infant formula with well water or drinks well water, annual testing is recommended. Testing well water is easy and can be low cost. Testing can help families decide if well water is the best choice for preparing infant formula. It is recommended that you test your well water if it has not been tested within the past year.

What if I am unable to test my well water?

All infant formula should be prepared with purchased bottled water or water from a public water system if you are unable to test your well water. If you receive formula through WIC, talk with your WIC staff about other formula options.



What if the test says my well water is not safe to use?

Do not use the water for formula until you have confirmed that it is safe to use. For questions about treatment options for your domestic well, contact the drinking water specialist at your local or county health department.

What if my baby is younger than 2 months old, was born prematurely, or has a weakened immune system?

If you tested your well water and know it is safe to use, WIC recommends sanitizing water by boiling it for one minute and then allowing it to cool. For healthy infants 2 months and older, it is not necessary to sanitize the water unless a health care provider recommends it.

Speak with your baby's health care provider about additional ways to protect your baby.

How do I get my well tested?

If you have questions or concerns about the safety of your well water, visit www.healthoregon.org/wells, email Domestic.Wells@odhsoha.oregon.gov, call Oregon's Domestic Well Safety Program at 541-952-9254, or contact your local health department. [Here is a list of local and county health departments in Oregon](#) with their contact information