

# Do you own a well?

If your well water contains...

## Nitrates/nitrites

### Did you know?

Nitrates/nitrites in water come from the use of chemical fertilizers and manure, defective septic systems, and the decomposition of vegetable and animal matter.

The main source of nitrates/nitrites is food (vegetables, cold meats).

In Quebec, the standard for nitrates/nitrites in drinking water is **10 mg/L**.

#### Caution

Boiling the water will have no effect.

### What are the health risks?

- Exposure to nitrates/nitrites can cause respiratory problems in infants up to six months old and to fetuses.
- Current data indicates that nitrates/nitrites in drinking water can be carcinogenic if the water is consumed regularly over the course of many decades.

### When should you do water tests?

- If you live in an agricultural zone or a residential district with individual septic systems, nitrate/nitrite tests should be done twice a year, in spring and fall, especially if a previous test has shown a concentration greater than 5 mg/L.
- If there is a pregnant woman using the water or if the well water is used to prepare bottles for a baby of less than six months, it is recommended that nitrate/nitrite tests be done on the drinking water.

### What should you do to protect your health?

- If the concentration is greater than 10 mg/L, it is recommended that another water source be used

for direct consumption and the preparation of drinks for pregnant women and for the preparation of bottles and baby foods for infants less than six months old.

- Everyone should avoid regular consumption of water containing more than 10 mg/L of nitrates/nitrites. If the concentration is greater than 20 mg/L, it is preferable to completely stop its consumption.
- The water can be used for domestic and personal hygiene purposes.

### What should you do to fix the problem?

- Identify the cause of the contamination and take the necessary corrective action (maintenance of the septic system, spreading of fertilizers, etc.).
- You can install a domestic water treatment device to reduce the concentration of nitrates/nitrites in the water to an acceptable level. You must be sure to install a certified system that conforms to NSF/ANSI standards and then maintain it following the manufacturer's recommendations.

If you suspect health problems related to the quality of your water, contact **Info-Santé**, by calling 811.

For more information, go to "The Quality of My Well Water" on the MDDELCC website: [mddelcc.gouv.qc.ca](http://mddelcc.gouv.qc.ca)

**Centre intégré de santé et de services sociaux des Laurentides:** [santelaurentides.gouv.qc.ca](http://santelaurentides.gouv.qc.ca)