

CLUES QUICK-REFERENCE

Use CLUES to identify potential contaminants and prioritize testing for private well water.

CLUE	WHAT TO CONSIDER	MAY SUGGEST THESE CONTAMINANTS	EXAMPLES / NOTES
C CHARACTERISTICS OF THE WELL 	- How old is the well? - How deep is it? - Dug or drilled? - Has it flooded? - What are the plumbing materials (lead, copper, galvanized)?	 Bacteria/ Microbial Contaminants  Lead  Copper  Nitrate (shallow wells more vulnerable) Others depending on conditions	Well construction and condition can affect the risk of surface water contamination and plumbing-related metals.
L LAND USE 	- What activities occur nearby? - Agriculture or livestock? - Industry or manufacturing? - Mining? - Military installations or fire training areas? - Septic systems? - Landfills or waste sites?	 Nitrate  Pesticides/Herbicides  VOCs (solvents, industrial chemicals)  PFAS  Metals (arsenic, chromium, etc.)  Petroleum products Others depending on activities	Land use can introduce chemicals or pathogens to groundwater through surface infiltration or improper waste management.
U USERS AT INCREASED RISK 	- Are infants or young children using the water? - Pregnant people? - Older adults? - Immunocompromised individuals?	 Nitrate (especially important for infants)  Lead, Nitrate, certain chemicals  Lead, Microbial contaminants  Microbial contaminants	Some contaminants pose greater health risks to certain populations. Who is drinking the water matters.
E ENVIRONMENTAL & GEOLOGIC CONDITIONS 	- What is the local geology (bedrock, sand/gravel, karst, etc.)? - Are naturally occurring contaminants known in the area? - Is the area prone to flooding or drought? - What is the depth and vulnerability of the aquifer?	 Arsenic  Uranium  Manganese  Fluoride  Radon  Salinity Others depending on conditions	Geology and environmental conditions can contribute naturally occurring contaminants or affect how easily contaminants reach groundwater.
S SOURCES OF EXISTING INFORMATION 	- What information already exists? - Where can we find local data and resources? - What have residents reported? - Have nearby wells been tested?	 State Geological Survey  State Health Department  State Environmental Agency  USGS  EPA  Previous sampling data  Local investigations & community concerns	Use existing data and trusted resources to fill information gaps and strengthen decision-making.



PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Use CLUES to identify likely contaminants, then prioritize based on likelihood, health risk, and the ability to take action (test, treat, or protect).



★ The goal is not memorizing a contaminant list – it is learning how to determine what matters locally.