



TULE BASIN

MANAGEMENT ZONE

**IS MY WATER SAFE TO
DRINK?**

MODULE 4

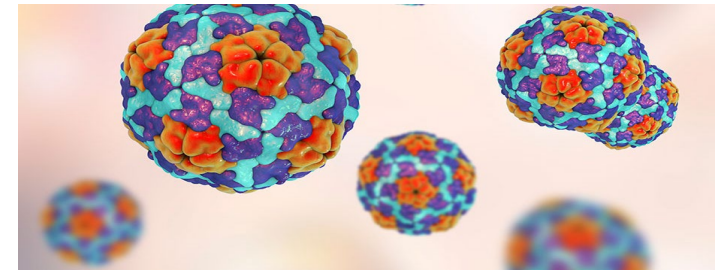
What is a Contaminant?

- In drinking water, the word “contaminant” is used to describe something that makes the water unsafe or undesirable to drink.

Types of Drinking Water Contaminants

There are **three** types of contaminants that can make water unsafe to drink:

- Biological (bacteria, viruses, and parasites)
 - Example: *E. coli*
- Mineral
 - Examples: Iron, Calcium, Arsenic
- Chemical
 - Examples: Pesticides such as 1,2,3-TCP or DBCP



Contaminants & Drinking Water Safety

- Small amounts of some contaminants are not harmful to human health
- In groundwater, soil acts as a natural filter to remove biological contaminants
- The risk of negative health impacts is more likely with higher concentrations of a contaminant in water
- Water with contaminant concentrations (amount of contaminant/volume of water) above the “Maximum Contaminant Level” (MCL) is not safe to drink



Introduction to MCLs

- MCLs means “Maximum Contaminant Levels”
- Drinking water MCLs are set to protect human health
- MCLs are set by the State and Federal government
- MCLs are set at different levels for each contaminant
- The concentration of a contaminant is usually described as number of milligrams per liter
 - MCL for Nitrate is 10 mg/L

Is My Drinking Water from a Public Water System Safe To Drink?

- Your tap water probably comes from a Public Water System (PWS) if you live within city limits and you or your landlord pay a water bill
 - To find the name of your PWS
 - look on the bill or ask landlord
- PWS are legally required to **test** their water for contaminants and **treat** drinking water to meet required MCL standards
- PWS must notify users of MCL exceedances
 - The notice is mailed to the homeowner
 - If you rent, the notice may go to your landlord
- PWS publish water quality results annually in a consumer confidence report
 - To find this, search online for “[name of your PWS] consumer confidence report”

Is My Domestic Well Water Safe To Drink?

- Private domestic wells are **not legally required** to test or treat drinking water
- Only one way to know that well water is safe
→ get well water tested by a laboratory
- How does a renter know if they have a well?
→ ask landlord or look for a wellhead and pump around home (examples below)



How Do I Test My Domestic Well?

- A qualified laboratory will sample from the well to look for certain chemicals
- The Tule Basin Management Zone is focused on nitrate related issues. It's important to consider testing well water for other contaminants
- Contact a local lab for specific instructions on sample collection
- The Tulare County Health Department has made available a list of local labs, which is posted to the tularecountyeh.org/eh/forms/water-wells