

# **wellcare<sup>®</sup> information for you about Turbidity in Drinking Water**

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## **What is Turbidity?**

Turbidity is a measure of the cloudiness of water. It can come from fairly benign sources, such as suspended sediment in the water, or from high levels of disease-causing organisms. All are generated as water moves through soil and into your ground water supply.

Turbidity caused by high levels of organic matter can protect microorganisms from the effects of drinking water disinfection. It can even stimulate bacterial growth. Therefore, it is critical to successful water treatment and disinfection to keep turbidity levels low.

## **What are the health effects of Turbidity?**

Higher turbidity levels are often associated with higher levels of disease-causing microorganisms such as viruses, parasites and some bacteria. These organisms can cause nausea, cramps, diarrhea and associated headaches.

## **How do I test for Turbidity?**

If your water looks cloudy or if you plan to install a water treatment device, you should have your water tested. Contact your state or local health department for a list of state-certified laboratories in your area.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has set the drinking water standard for turbidity at 1 NTU (nephelometric turbidity unit). Public water supplies must not exceed 0.3 NTU in 95 percent of the daily water samples they take every month.

An NTU is the measurement of light that passes through a sample of water; the more particles that are in the water, the higher the NTU number. Most well owners will not notice high turbidity at levels at or below 5 NTU in their drinking water. However, health standards are much lower.

## **What are the treatments for Turbidity in drinking water?**

The Water Quality Association (WQA) recommends treating water for turbidity with an activated carbon filter or a particulate filter. Ask your water well professional or local or state health department for guidance.

**For more information about Turbidity in Drinking Water**

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Drinking Water Contaminants. Retrieved May 4, 2007 from [www.epa.gov/safewater/mcl.html](http://www.epa.gov/safewater/mcl.html)

Water Quality Association. Aesthetic Water Quality Problems. Retrieved May 4, 2007 from <http://www.wqa.org/sitelogic.cfm?ID=867>

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**For more information on your drinking water**

Contact your local water well professional or health department for information on ground water in your area. The following websites provide up-to-date information on efforts to protect drinking water supplies and steps you can take as a private well owner. In addition, you may contact the **wellcare®** hotline at 1-888-395-1033.

Underwriters Laboratories Inc. Drink Well™ Well Water Testing  
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency  
Water Quality Association

[www.uldrinkwell.com](http://www.uldrinkwell.com)  
[www.epa.gov](http://www.epa.gov)  
[www.wqa.org](http://www.wqa.org)

**For more information about wells and other wellcare® publications**

**wellcare®** is a program of the **Water Systems Council (WSC)**. WSC is a national nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting the wider use of wells as modern and affordable safe drinking water systems and to protecting ground water resources nationwide. This publication is one in a series of **wellcare®** information sheets. There were more than 60 available at the time this document was published. They can be downloaded FREE from the WSC website at [www.watersystemscouncil.org](http://www.watersystemscouncil.org). Well owners and others with questions about wells or ground water can also contact the **wellcare®** hotline at 1-888-395-1033 or visit [www.wellcarehotline.org](http://www.wellcarehotline.org)



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