



Private Water Systems Home Study Course

Lesson 5 Frequently Asked Questions

Is it a problem if your well or spring water gets cloudy temporarily after rain events?

Yes. If your drinking water supply becomes turbid, particularly after rain events, it means that you have a source of surface water getting into your water system. Usually, this is an indicator that your water is contaminated with coliform bacteria. The first thing you should do is try to seal your water supply properly so that you can stop the surface water from entering. After that, you should have your water tested. If your water has coliform bacteria present, you can try shock chlorinating your supply and retest periodically to ensure that all of the bacteria are eliminated. If the bacteria returns, you may need to purchase a continuous disinfection system (chlorination or ultraviolet light).

My water test indicated that I have a hardness of 100 mg/L. This has never caused a problem for our family, but the treatment company says that a softener will get our hardness to 0 mg/L. Is a softener really necessary?

No. Hardness in water is very common in Pennsylvania and there is no health impact from drinking hard water. Sometimes water softeners are needed when individuals find that they have hard water (>120 mg/L) and it causes scaling on fixtures, soap not to lather, or it decreases the life of the hot water heater. It is important to note that softeners add sodium to your water and they remove essential nutrients like calcium and magnesium. If your family is not experiencing an aesthetic problem associated with the hardness, then there is really no good reason to purchase a water softener. In fact, water with moderate levels of hardness usually provides excellent corrosion control for plumbing systems.

How does a homeowner know if they need a drinking water treatment system?

All decisions about water treatment on a private water system should be made based on water tests conducted by a state certified water testing laboratory and advice from unbiased professionals. Water treatment equipment should never be purchased based on tests done within the home or advice from the same treatment vendor that wants to sell you the equipment.

Deciding on a treatment system for most nuisance contaminants can be much easier since the problem is easily detected by your senses. However, water testing is necessary to confirm if water treatment is needed for contaminants that pose a potential health risk. After you receive the water test results, consult an unbiased professional for advice on what treatment system is best for your home.

Should I treat all of the water in the home or just the kitchen tap?

Deciding how much water to treat in your home depends on the type of problem that you have with your drinking water. For most nuisance contaminants, a point-of-use (POU) device will probably be appropriate. A point-of-entry (POE) device should be used for most contaminants that pose a serious health risk when consumed or during human exposure. These are general recommendations and all decisions on the type of treatment system should be made based on advice from unbiased qualified professionals.