



# Private water supplies: Essential information

This leaflet contains information for people who use a private water supply for drinking.

It offers advice on checks you can do to maintain a safe supply, potential risks to health, and what to do if you think your supply is polluted.

**Environmental Health Jersey**

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## Useful contacts

### **To get your water tested**

Official Analyst Department  
analyst@gov.je

736455

### **To request to join mains water**

Jersey Water  
customerservices@jerseywater.je

707300

### **To get your septic tank emptied**

Growth, Housing and Environment  
dfi@gov.je

445509

### **To discuss your water results**

Environmental Health  
environmentalhealth@gov.je

445808

### **To report pollution**

Environmental Protection  
envprotection@gov.je

709535

Government of Jersey website

[www.gov.je](http://www.gov.je)

**If you would like information in a different language or  
format, please ask us.**

## What is a private water supply?

A private water supply is one which is not provided by Jersey Water and where the responsibility for its maintenance and repair lies with the owner or person who uses it.



About 10% of the population in Jersey do not have a public supply of mains water to their home and instead rely on a private water supply. Mostly, but not exclusively, these occur in the rural parts of the Island.

The source of a private supply can be a well, borehole, spring, stream, or rainwater. The supply may serve just a single property or it can be much larger, serving many properties and businesses.

## Water quality

Safe drinking water is essential for health. Private water supplies can pose a risk to public health because usually they are not designed, managed or tested to provide water of the same high standard as public water supplies (mains water).

Private water supplies can be contaminated with bacteria, protozoa, pesticides, nitrates, parasites and viruses (micro-organisms) or other substances. The radioactive gas radon may also be present. All of these contaminants can pose a risk to health.

Sometimes the contaminants affect only the appearance of the water, but others can cause serious illness (or even death) in vulnerable people.

Contamination does not necessarily affect the smell, taste or colour of the water. You may not be able to tell whether or not your water is safe just by looking at it or tasting it: this is why regular testing and appropriate treatment is so important.

It is important to have your water tested regularly (i.e. annually). This service is provided by the Official Analyst Department for a charge.



## Five things you should know about your water supply

**1. The source of your water** – is it a borehole, a well, a rainwater tank, or a spring?

**2. Upkeep and maintenance** – who's responsible? Is there an agreement with the owner or other users about how it's managed?

**3. Pipes and tanks** – how does water get to your property? Are the pipes and tanks in good condition and serviced regularly?

**5. Water quality** – is the water tested? How often? What are the results?

**6. Treatment** – Is the water treated in any way, either at source or at the tap? Is the treatment equipment right? Is it working well and serviced regularly?



## Keeping your water supply safe

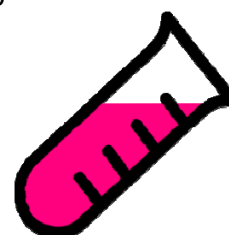
- Get your supply checked, treated as necessary, and maintained regularly. You can find a list of water treatment engineers in the Yellow Pages.
- Shallow wells, boreholes and springs are particularly at risk of surface runoff contamination especially during heavy rain. Make sure they are protected. A water treatment engineer can advise you how to do this.
- Farmers should follow the Water Code (see [www.gov.je](http://www.gov.je)) when spreading organic manures and pesticides on land near boreholes and water courses. They must not spread organic manure on to land within 50 metres of a borehole or well, or within 10 metres of a watercourse (a brook, stream, or water channel). If you believe a farmer is spreading too close to a water source report this to the Environment Department.
- The registration or licensing of water sources is a legal requirement under the Water Resources (Jersey) Law 2007. If your borehole or well is not registered (or licensed) farmers will not know where it is located and may spread organic manure close to your water source. This has led to the contamination of several un-registered sources in recent years.
- If you are not on mains drainage the position of your private drainage system (e.g. septic tank and soakaway) is important. It should be a minimum of 50 metres from your private water supply.

## Do you supply water to others?

If you supply water to other people in the course of a business, for example bed and breakfast, renting out property or using water for a campsite, café or other food production, you have a duty in law to ensure that the water is safe and wholesome.

You should get your water tested regularly. Until you are sure that your supply is safe and wholesome, you should seek advice and consider the need to:

- Advise customers, guests or tenants to boil all water for drinking and food production, or
- Provide users with bottled water.



## How to get your water tested

For routine testing of water contact the Official Analyst Department.

If you think your private supply has become polluted you should phone the pollution hotline on 709535 and arrange for the water to be tested for chemicals and bacteria by the States Analyst. There is a charge for this service which varies depending on what is being tested.

The Official Analyst will provide you with a written report on the quality of your water. If you have any health concerns please contact Environmental Health.

## How can you improve your water supply?

You may need to treat your water, replace the pipes or carry out maintenance or other improvements. A water treatment engineer will be able to give you advice on treatment options.

If you are not on mains drains it is important to regularly check your private drainage system and arrange for it to be emptied as required, ideally every six months and at least once a year.

You can arrange this by contacting the Tanker Emptying service at Transport and Technical Services or a private contractor (see the Yellow Pages).

## Water quality and health information

Historically, Jersey's groundwater has high levels of nitrates. Jersey Water deals with these by blending waters from different sources to ensure levels are kept within international guidelines. This is not possible with private water supplies from a single source. It is advisable to have your water tested for nitrates to ensure you can take any necessary action to treat your supply.

Private water supplies can be contaminated with bacteria, protozoa, pesticides, nitrates, parasites and viruses (micro-organisms) or other substances. The radioactive gas radon may also be present.

### **Children, over 65s, and people with weakened immunity**

If you are pregnant, or have babies or young children, it is recommended that you get your private water supply tested to ensure it is not contaminated. The Official Analyst will provide you with a written report on the quality of your water. If you have any queries on the report or would like further guidance, please contact Environmental Health.

If you are pregnant or breastfeeding, or have a young baby, and the nitrate levels in your water supply exceed 50mg/l you should use bottled water to mix your baby's formula milk feed, and for drinking water.

If you have young children, (below the age of 3) who drink large volumes of water (as water, in squash etc.) you should also use low nitrate bottled water where possible under these circumstances. Bottled water should be still, not sparkling, and also be low in sodium (Na) (i.e. salt under 100mg/l).

If any member of your household is over 65 or immuno-compromised they may be more vulnerable to water borne illness. It is also recommended you get your private water supply tested to ensure it is not contaminated.

Further advice on typical contaminants and their health effects can be found at [http://www.who.int/water\\_sanitation\\_health/publications/2011/dwq\\_guidelines/en/](http://www.who.int/water_sanitation_health/publications/2011/dwq_guidelines/en/)





## Legal aspects

By law, if you are taking water from a borehole, well or stream you need to be either registered or licensed. More information about private water supplies registration and licensing is available at [www.gov.je](http://www.gov.je) or Environmental Protection (see page 1 for contact details).

International guidelines on drinking water quality are published by the World Health Organisation (WHO)

[http://www.who.int/water\\_sanitation\\_health/dwq/guidelines/en/](http://www.who.int/water_sanitation_health/dwq/guidelines/en/)

In Jersey, water supplied by Jersey Water has to meet standards which are set out locally in the Water (Jersey) Law, 1972, as amended. The quality of water supplied by the company is regulated by the Minister for Planning and Environment. The annual water quality report produced by the company is available at [www.jerseywater.je](http://www.jerseywater.je).

Private water supplies for individual households in Jersey are not covered by specific legislation. Environmental Health can give health advice on the safety of your private water supply.

If a private water supply is used commercially in food premises or to supply rented accommodation then it must comply with the Food Safety (Jersey) Law 1966.

Landlords are required to provide safe drinking water under the Statutory Nuisances (Jersey) Law 1999.

## Useful links

[www.who.int](http://www.who.int)

[www.gov.je](http://www.gov.je)

<http://dwi.defra.gov.uk/consumers/advice-leaflets/pws.pdf>

<http://www.privatewatersupplies.gov.uk/>

## Private water supply key points

What is a private water supply?

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Keep your water supply safe

SEE THE ACTIONS ON PAGE 3

How do I get my water tested?

SEE THE INFORMATION ON PAGE 4



Water quality and health information

SEE THE INFORMATION ON PAGE 5

**Notes:**



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