

ARSENIC FACT SHEET

What is arsenic?

Arsenic is a naturally occurring element widely distributed in the earth's crust. It is found in combination with either inorganic or organic substances to form many different compounds. According to the CDC: "Inorganic arsenic compounds are found in soils, sediments, and groundwater. These compounds occur either naturally or as a result of mining, ore smelting, and industrial use of arsenic. Organic arsenic compounds are found mainly in fish and shellfish. In the past, inorganic forms of arsenic were used in pesticides and paint pigments. They were also used as wood preservatives and as a treatment for a variety of ailments. Today, usage of arsenic-containing pesticides and wood preservatives is restricted."

Where is arsenic found in Texas?

The 2018 Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) report suggested high arsenic levels in the southern Gulf Coast, southern High Plains, and the Trinity Aquifer.

Can arsenic make you sick?

Studies have shown that chronic or repeated ingestion of water with arsenic over a person's lifetime is associated with increased risk of cancer (of the skin, bladder, lung, kidney, nasal passages, liver or prostate) and non-cancerous effects (diabetes, cardiovascular, immunological and neurological disorders).

Should I test my well for arsenic?

If you have never tested your well for arsenic before, you are strongly encouraged to test at least once. Because arsenic originates in the geologic formations of Texas, it is not expected to change drastically with the seasons. It is recommended that all new wells be tested at least initially, and existing wells be tested at least once or whenever something changes that could affect the well. For example, your well is rehabilitated, or there is new irrigation or construction in proximity to the well. Retesting for arsenic should be repeated every five years.

Is there a drinking water standard for arsenic?

Yes, there is for public water supplies. In 2006, the Environmental Protection Agency lowered the arsenic standard for drinking water to .010 parts per million (10 parts per billion) to protect consumers served by public water systems from the effects of long-term, chronic exposure to arsenic. While private wells are not regulated for arsenic or required to treat water containing arsenic, the EPA standard is still used for guidance. (Sources of info: water.epa.gov/lawsregs/rulesregs/sdwa/arsenic/index.cfm)

Can I boil my water to remove arsenic?

No. Arsenic cannot be removed from water by boiling. Arsenic removal from water requires special adsorption media.