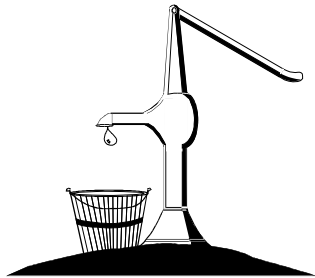


Can My Water Make Me Sick?



Yes, your water can make you sick! There are a lot of different reasons. People with wells or cisterns are more likely to have unhealthy water. People drinking city water from water treatment plants can also get sick.

Do you have straight pipes with no septic system? Is your septic system working right? You may be at greater risk of getting ill from your water.



Common Water Borne Illnesses:

- **Viruses**—one of the most common infections is Hepatitis A. This is a liver disease. It is easily spread in areas that are unclean. Persons with poor hygiene are at high risk.

Hepatitis A Symptoms:

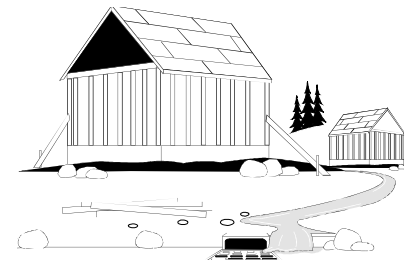
- Yellowing of eyes and skin
- Dark urine
- Loss of appetite
- Nausea
- Fever or stomach ache

There are other viruses in addition to Hepatitis A that may cause illness. Some of them may survive water treatment systems.

- **Parasites** – one of the most common illnesses is Giardiasis. It is caused by untreated or poorly treated water.

Giardiasis Symptoms:

- Bad smelling greasy diarrhea
- Gas
- Stomach ache
- Fatigue
- Weight loss



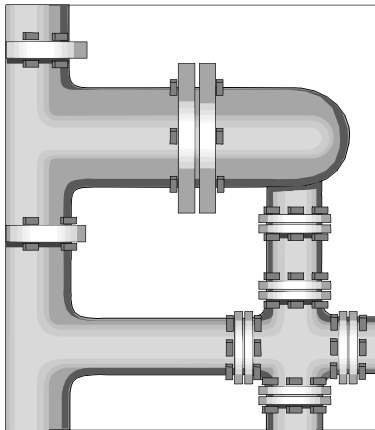
- **Bacteria**-- Some types of bacteria are good and necessary. Shigellosis is caused by a group of bad bacteria. Water contaminated by an infected person can cause this sickness.

Shigellosis Symptoms:

- Fever
- Stomach pain
- Diarrhea (with or without blood in stool)

Lead Poisoning

- Lead in drinking water can come from pipes or solder used to connect water pipes. It occurs after the water gets into your own plumbing system. Lead poisoning causes damage to your brain, kidneys, nervous system and red blood cells. Children and pregnant women are at greatest risk.



What Can I Do To Prevent My Water From Making Me Sick?

1. Don't allow your sewage to go out straight pipes and contaminate creeks and groundwater.
2. Make sure your septic system is working right and not polluting the area.
3. Wash your hands well before touching food, after using the bathroom or changing diapers, after working or playing outside, and after handling animals or animal waste.
4. Locate wells in a safe place uphill from septic tanks, feedlots, animal pens, and away from pesticides.
5. If you think you have lead in your pipes, drink and cook with cold tap water. Let water that has been in the pipes over 4 hours run until it is as cold as it gets (2 minutes).

Written by: Denise Hoffman, Linda Heaton, Kim Henken and Jenny Cocanougher.

This material is based upon work supported by the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, under special project number EWQI-10395.

Educational programs of Kentucky Cooperative Extension serve all people regardless of race, color, age, sex, religion, disability, or national origin.

Original April, 1999. Revised February, 2007
by Ashley Osborne, Extension Associate for ENRI.

Can My Water Make Me Sick?

We think we're doing something healthy when we drink a glass of clear water. But can that water be making us sick? In some cases it can.

**What signs should I look for?
What can I do?**

