

YOUR DRINKING WATER. YOUR DECISION.

What could be impacting you? High nitrates.

What are nitrates?

Nitrate is a colorless, odorless, and tasteless compound that is present in some groundwater. Nitrate is a naturally occurring form of nitrogen found in soil. Rain or irrigation water can carry nitrates down through the soil into groundwater. In moderate amounts, nitrate is a harmless constituent of water. However, higher levels can indicate that the groundwater could be contaminated and are often caused by human activity.

What human activities increase nitrates in drinking water?

Common sources of nitrate contamination include fertilizers, manure, animal feedlots, municipal wastewater and sludge, on-site sewage treatment systems and decaying plant debris.

What are the health effects of drinking water with high nitrates?

Methemoglobinemia is a blood disorder in which high levels of nitrate prevent the blood from delivering oxygen effectively to different parts of the body. As a result, infants less than 6 months of age may have blueness around the mouth, hands, and feet. Pregnant women also do not tolerate nitrates very well. In women who are nursing their babies, nitrate can pass through the mother's milk to her baby and affect the baby indirectly.

Once a drinking water supply has been contaminated, the cost to remove the nitrates/nitrites or drill more wells can be very expensive. The cost to correct the problem will trickle down to you, the consumer.

What you can do to protect our drinking water...

- Don't over fertilize.
- Keep livestock away from wells.
- Maintain your individual sewer system.
- Be informed. Know where your drinking water supply wells are located.

Contact your local **DEQ Environmental Specialist for more information.**

