

WHAT IS URANIUM?

Uranium is a naturally occurring radioactive metal. Small amounts of uranium occur naturally in groundwater in some areas of Georgia. Uranium in groundwater occurs mainly in the northern *Piedmont* region. As a result, some private drinking water wells may exceed the federal Drinking Water Standard for uranium. While this is not an immediate health concern, you should know what is in your drinking water.

Geologic Regions of Georgia



Radioactive elements are unstable in nature and to reach a more stable condition, they give off energy, or radiation in the form of particles. If an elevated level of uranium is determined to exist in your well water, it should be treated with a filtration system. You can reduce your exposure by substituting a portion of well water used for drinking and cooking with bottled water.

This brochure will help you understand the health effects from exposure to uranium in your well water. We can not eliminate radiation from our environment. We can, however, reduce the health risks by minimizing our exposure to it.



IS MY WATER SAFE?

In Georgia, some private drinking water wells have uranium at levels above the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Maximum Contaminant Level (MCL) of 30 parts per billion. This uranium is naturally occurring and not the result of pollution. If you think your private well water is affected, testing is recommended. Because levels will fluctuate, one test will not accurately reflect uranium levels; therefore, multiple testing is necessary.

People consuming water from a private well, cistern or spring are responsible for their own testing. Testing for uranium in private drinking water wells may be done through the county Cooperative Extension office or a private lab.

URANIUM AND RADON GAS

Uranium is also the source of radon gas. Homes in high risk areas of Georgia should be tested for radon gas. The high risk areas for radon are in north Georgia along and above the Fall Line. If the level of radon gas is elevated, there are inexpensive methods to reduce it.

WHAT ARE THE HEALTH EFFECTS FROM EXPOSURE?

Uranium in water may pose a health risk when the water is used for drinking and cooking over many years. Skin contact with water containing uranium does not constitute a health risk. A small portion of ingested uranium is absorbed by the body from the digestive tract but most is eliminated. Absorbed uranium settles in body tissues, and over a period of time it can affect kidney function. If you have health concerns about uranium, contact your physician.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Is my well water safe to drink?

Testing is the only way to know. Uranium gets into well water from bedrock that contains uranium. Wells at most risk are those deeper than 100 feet on granite bedrock.

Is my well water monitored?

By law, all public water systems must be monitored for radioactivity. Private drinking water wells can be monitored through annual testing by the homeowner.

Can I use my water for bathing and laundry?

Yes, this water can continue to be used for bathing, showering, dish and clothes washing.

Can I water my garden?

Yes, this water can continue to be used for growing food.

Can private well water owners correct the problem?

Yes. For wells that exceed the MCL, filtration devices can be installed. Affordable, at-home options such as reverse osmosis systems are available from many manufacturers.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Monroe County Health
Department
Environmental Health Section
(478) 993-3081

www.northcentralhealthdistrict.com

Georgia Environmental Protection
Division
Drinking Water Compliance
Program
(404) 656-4807

www.gaepd.org

U.S. Environmental Protection
Agency
Radiation Protection Programs
(404) 562-9459

www.epa.gov/radiation/basic

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URANIUM IN PRIVATE DRINKING WATER WELLS



 **North Central
Health District**
Public Health for Middle Georgia