



Transcript: Arsenic and Uranium in Private Wells
Interview with Brian Toal
March 18, 2013

Narrator: Recently, the Connecticut Department of Public Health recommended that all homeowners with private wells test their wells for arsenic and uranium. I'm here with Brian Toal, Supervising Epidemiologist with the Department of Public Health, to talk about the recommendation.

Can you tell us a little bit about the recommendation, Brian?

Brian: Yes, well, as a result of a number of findings from around the state with elevated levels of arsenic and uranium in private wells, we've decided to recommend that all private wells in the state of Connecticut should be tested for both contaminants at least once.

Narrator: Is there any part of the state that should get tested? Is it found more in one part of the state than the other?

Brian: The findings have been fairly sporadic and we have found them almost in all four corners of the state. So no, there is no particular place that we can say is particularly at risk and no part of the state that we can say is safe. Therefore, we're saying that all wells in all parts of the state should be tested.

Narrator: Can you tell us about arsenic and uranium? How does it get into our private well water and what are the possible health effects?

Brian: Both arsenic and uranium are naturally occurring metals. They are found in the bedrock in the Earth's crust and when groundwater comes in contact with these metals, the metals can leech out and get into the groundwater and then get into the private wells. Arsenic is a well-known human carcinogen and increases risk of lung cancer, bladder cancer and skin cancer. Uranium is not a radioactive risk, but the metal itself has toxicity that can decrease kidney function.

Narrator: How do I get my private well tested? Is this part of the standard test?

Brian: Well, that's important. Arsenic and uranium are not part of the standard test and when you get your well tested for a new well, it probably will not be tested for arsenic and uranium. So you need to specifically ask a private laboratory to do a separate analysis for arsenic and a separate analysis for uranium. A list of private laboratories that can do this type of test can be found at the Department of Public Health website.

Narrator: What happens if my well tests positive for arsenic or uranium? How do I treat my water?

Brian: If your water is above the drinking water standard for arsenic or uranium, you can hire a private well treatment company to design a treatment system for your well. There is no one size, no one system. There is no "one size fits all." So you will have to have a company design a system specific to your well.

Narrator: Thanks, Brian. For more information on arsenic and uranium in private wells, go to our website at www.ct.gov/dph or call 860-509-7740