

Interpretation of Laboratory Results

Alkalinity is a measure of alkaline substances such as hydroxides, carbonates and bicarbonates with the capacity to neutralize acid.	No limit
Chlorides can be an indicator of sewage pollution if elevated. It should be noted that use of a water softener can increase chloride levels in a water sample.	250 mg/L*
Coliforms are a group of bacteria found mostly in the intestinal tract of animals and humans. The presence of coliforms can indicate that other disease-causing organisms may also be present in the water.	Absent
Color may result from iron, manganese, humus or industrial wastes.	15 units*
Copper is used in plumbing systems. It is not very toxic, but does cause staining.	1.3 mg/L
Detergents (MBAS) measure detergent concentration.	0.5 mg/L*
Hardness is a measure of calcium and magnesium in the water and is related to the soap-consuming power of water. High hardness can lead to white deposits on plumbing fixtures and glassware etc.	<200 mg/L*
Iron may cause staining on plumbing fixtures and clothes.	0.3 mg/L*
Lead is a metal formerly used in plumbing solder. It is no longer used, but many older homes still have lead in their piping. Excess lead can build up in the body and cause brain and nervous system effects.	0.015 mg/L
Manganese may cause staining on plumbing fixtures and clothes.	0.05 mg/L*
Nitrogen compounds including ammonia, nitrate and nitrite can indicate sewage or fertilizer contamination. Nitrate in excess of 10 mg/L is potentially dangerous to very young children including during pregnancy and while breastfeeding.	Nitrate 10 mg/L Nitrite 1 mg/L
Odor is a subjective evaluation of acceptability of the water.	<2*
pH defines the hydrogen-ion concentration in the water and represents the aggressiveness of the water toward pipes etc. A low pH being more corrosive.	6.4 – 10.0
Sodium can be naturally occurring or the result of sodium-based water softener backwash or road salt. People with high blood pressure or certain heart conditions, on a low salt diet, may need to be aware of the sodium content of the water.	100 mg/L
Sulfate may have health effects at high concentrations (laxative and taste issues).	250 mg/L
Turbidity measures the light scattering property of particles in the water. Turbid water will look cloudy.	5 NTUs

*Recommended limits only