



BOARD OF HEALTH

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Tips for Testing Your Well Water

Disclaimer: These tips do not apply to testing for the purposes of new construction and home sales. Please see the [Private Well Water Sampling and Quality Testing Requirements for the Sale of Property](#) and Ch. 145, Sec. 18, in [Article II: Private Wells](#) in the Code of the Town of Harvard for requirements regarding sampling of newly constructed wells.

Overview:

- The Harvard Board of Health (BoH) and our Health Agent can't recommend a particular laboratory.
- MassDEP maintains a list of certified laboratories. Note that not all laboratories are certified for all contaminants. The BoH recommends that you use their resources to find a qualified lab. An explanation of how to use the MassDEP website is below.
- We recommend that you verify the certifications of the lab(s) testing your water sample(s).
- When organizing testing of your well water, work with the sampler and the laboratory to assure that sample holding times will not be exceeded by the time your sample arrives at the laboratory.
- If a laboratory test reveals something in your water, don't panic.
 - The BoH/Health Agent can advise.
 - A confirming test is the best second step.
 - Get copies of all your laboratory tests and file them.
 - The MassDEP website has an "[Understanding my laboratory results](#)" page. This site links to the "[Be Well Informed](#)" website.
 - Select "Massachusetts"
 - Input the laboratory results, then click "Submit"
 - You will get a report telling you whether you need to treat your water and which things to treat for
- If you do choose to have a treatment system installed:
 - Depending on what was found in your water, you might need to have additional water quality tests done. Speak to a water treatment company or the Health Agent for guidance.

- See the Mass guidelines regarding what types of systems are allowed for those on septic systems. For PFAS, refer to [this page](#) on types of systems to treat your water. Note that Reverse Osmosis systems are not allowed under Title 5.
- When selecting a treatment system, be sure to check on what type of maintain the system will require.

How to use MassDEP's "[Find a Certified Laboratory for Water Testing](#)". There are instructions on that webpage. Alternately, go to the [Online Searchable Laboratory Certification Listing](#):

To find a laboratory that tests for a particular contaminant (aka, "Analyte") in Massachusetts:

- In the State pulldown, Select MA
- In the Analyte box, select what you want to test for, e.g. "PFAS", or leave blank.
- To limit the search to drinking water, in the Matrix box, select "Potable"
- Click Search

For example, a search on 4/10/23 for certified labs in MA that are MassDEP approved to test for PFAS resulted in four labs: Alpha Analytical, New England Chromachem Inc, Context (A PACE Analytical Laboratory), and MWRA Central Laboratory. There are also laboratories certified by MassDEP to test for PFAS in NH and CT (as well as other states).

Leaving the Analyte box blank, but selecting MA in the State pulldown, will give a list of all laboratories in MA certified by MassDEP.

Note that MassDEP-certified municipal water and wastewater treatment plant ("WTP") laboratories do not accept samples from private well owners. Look for a MassDEP-certified commercial laboratory or a MassDEP-certified municipal environmental public health laboratory. Please contact the laboratory to confirm they can test your water, get a price quote, confirm how to get a water sample to them, and find out whether they have capacity.