

Households on their own water supply

Safe water is vital for the good health of you, your family, and friends who visit your home.

We frequently hear people say ‘my water is fine, its never made me sick’, but often it is visitors from out of town who get sick after drinking water from household water supplies.

How water contamination can happen

Water contamination can cause illness (like diarrhoea and vomiting) that can be particularly dangerous for infants, very old people or people with damaged immune systems.

Water can become contaminated in many different ways:

- Human or animal faeces get into the source water. This can occur after heavy rain where water containing faeces may run down the sides of a well casing into the groundwater.
- Animal or bird droppings may wash off the roof into rainwater collection tanks.
- A storage tank may have a lid that doesn't seal properly and allows animal or bird droppings to wash off the roof into the tank.
- Dead animals or leaves in roof guttering entering rainwater storage tanks.



How I can make my water safe

There are many things you can do to make your water safe, however specific actions will depend largely on the type of source water you are using.

You need to consider:

1. Stopping contaminants getting into your water in the first place.
2. Removing dirt and killing any germs that do get into your source water (such as installing some form of water treatment device).
3. Stopping water from getting re-contaminated in your tank or pipework.

The most important thing to remember is that all household water supply systems require some form of ongoing maintenance – such as cleaning guttering and roof surfaces, emptying and cleaning tanks, changing filters, replacing seals (just to name a few).

[Read the Ministry of Health pamphlet “Water collection tanks and safe household water”](#) for more information on household drinking water supplies.