WATER SYSTEM
DISINFECTION
PROCEDURE

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County

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If you suspect that your water supply is
contaminated with harmful bacteria, we suggest
that you call a state-certified laboratory to verify
your concerns before undertaking any of the
techniques outlined in this document. The
Florida Department of Health in Lee County
operates such a laboratory at the address listed
below.

If your water supply has been tested by a state-
certified laboratory and found bacteriologically
unsafe for drinking, the following procedure can
be followed.

NOTE: We highly recommend that you hire a
certified well contractor or water system
operator to chlorinate your water system. The
Florida Department of Health in Lee County
assumes no responsibility for any use of the
information contained herein or any loss
resulting there from.

This procedure should not be confused with
routine maintenance. Repeated doses of high
chlorine concentrations can damage equipment
such as softeners, bladder tanks, or septic
systems. Maintain your system in good working
order and perform disinfection only when
absolutely necessary.

Chlorine
Use only a liquid sodium hypochlorite solution
such as common household bleach or pool
chlorine. **Do NOT use scented bleach or
stabilized pool chlorine tablets.** Also, be
aware that pool chlorine solutions have a limited
shelf life. If your pool chlorine is more than 2
weeks old, assume that it is no longer effective.

**Before You Begin**
Since chlorination procedures can take as long
as 8 hours, store enough water for consumption
and cooking purposes. If you suspect that the
water is bacteriologically unsafe, boil or add
chlorine to the stored water (see Emergency
Disinfection of Drinking Water). Also, plan
ahead. We recommend that you chlorinate your
system in the evening and let it sit overnight.
Disinfection (with Aerator)
1. Turn off the electrical power to the well pump.
2. If your water system has an aerator, drain the aerator by removing the plug at the bottom of the aerator.
3. Remove the lid and check the screens for damage. If the inside is dirty, clean thoroughly.
4. Remove any carbon filtration devices in the system. Carbon filters will remove the chlorine, making chlorinating your system a futile exercise. This would also be a very good time to replace your filters as they can harbor potentially harmful bacteria if they have not been replaced recently.
5. Turn on the pump and rinse the inside of the aerator for approximately 5 minutes, and then replace the drain plug.
6. Allow the aerator to fill with water, and then add 2 quarts of household bleach or 1 quart of pool chlorine.
7. Turn on the pump, and then pump the chlorinated water through the water system. Every outlet, including outside hose bibs, should be allowed to run until a strong smell of chlorine is detected.
   - **Do not run large volumes of this water into a drain leading to your septic tank. High chlorine levels may do heavy damage to septic systems.**
   - **Notify all users of water that a large amount of chlorine is in the water system and that the water should not be used for drinking, cooking, or bathing until the chlorine is flushed from the system.** (Toilet flushing is okay if necessary)
8. When the smell of chlorine can be detected at each outlet, turn the water off and let it sit in the lines for 6-8 hours. (Overnight is a good time to do this.)

Disinfection (without Aerator)
If you do not have an aerator, you must chlorinate the pressure tank. If it is a steel pressure vessel type:

1. Turn of the electrical power to the well pump.
2. Depressurize the system by running water.
3. Remove the plug and pour 1 cup of household bleach or ½ cup of pool chlorine. Reinstall the plug.
4. Turn the pump back on and follow steps 7 – 8 above.

**Flushing the System**
Run raw water taps and / or hose bibbs to flush the majority of the highly-chlorinated water from the system. Once there is no odor of chlorine from the outside taps, open all other outlets (including sinks) and flush the toilet until the chlorine odor is no longer detectable.

Take the time to inspect the components of your water system. A few things to look for:

- Ensure that the aerator screens are intact and in good repair.
- Make sure the aerator lid is screwed down, making a good seal on the rubber gasket.
- Make sure that all holes in the aerator (other than the screens) are properly covered and / or sealed.
- If you have bladder-type pressure tanks, make sure that the bladders are in good repair and that the tank is not waterlogged.
- Ensure that the sanitary seal of your wellhead is in good repair and properly sealed to the casing.

When you have completed the above procedure, please contact a state-certified laboratory so that a sample can be taken.

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Emergency Water Disinfection Link: https://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/drinking/travel/emergency_disinfection.html