

was built prior to 1925 or has a water softener you may want to have the water tested for lead.

How do I get my water tested?

Private laboratories offer testing either by you dropping off a sample at the facility or by mail. Rockland County Health Department also offers testing to homeowners. The fee for a bacteria test is \$35 and the fee for a lead test is \$30. Chemical testing ranges from \$100 and up depending on the testing requested. If you want the County Health Department to test your water call (845) 364-2608 to put in a request, and a sampler will call you back to schedule the test. Samples cannot be dropped off at the Health Department.

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Environmental Health Division
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ROCKLAND WATER TALK



**Commonly Asked
Questions About the
County's Drinking
Water**

Where does my drinking water come from?

Whether you have a private well or are on a public water system, your drinking water in this county comes primarily from wells. The Village of Nyack uses surface water and United Water New York customers in the southern part of the County get some water from Lake DeForest during the warm weather.

What is hard water?

Hard water is water that has a high mineral content. In Rockland, calcium is the most abundant mineral, but there can also be traces of zinc or iron.

What causes hard water?

While the water sits in the rock crevices underground it takes on minerals from the rock. When the water is pumped out through the well it takes these dissolved minerals with it.

How do I know if my water is hard?

The Village of Nyack does not have hard water, and the Village of Suffern has water that is less hard than the rest of Rockland. If you are not either of these areas, your water is probably hard. Hard water leaves white or gray deposits anywhere water sits such as in toilet bowls, and behind sinks. It causes spotting on glasses especially in the dishwasher, and mineral build-up in tea kettles and pots. Hard water will cause a rainbow effect or sudsing on the surface of boiled water. You may also notice "snowflakes" in the bottom of a glass after

ice melts. Soap does not lather up well and white laundry does not come out bright.

What are the side effects of hard water?

Hard water is not harmful to drink or use. It does not cause kidney stones or any other health effects. In fact the minerals in the hard water coat the insides of your pipes and help prevent lead and copper from leaching out of your pipes into the water.

Should I get a water softener?

Whether or not to get a water softener is a very personal choice. Although the hard water is not harmful, it does shorten the life of your hot water heater and causes some aesthetic problems. Some people simply don't like the taste of hard water. A water softener has its down sides too. A softener removes the calcium by replacing it with sodium. This may be a problem for people on restricted sodium diets. Some softeners are now available without sodium, but these chemicals are more expensive than the traditional sodium softeners. Also, in removing the calcium, a water softener changes how aggressive the water is towards your pipes. This coupled with the lack of coating in the pipes may cause slightly higher levels of lead and copper in your water. Sometimes the copper tints the water a pale blue-green or causes blue-green staining in sinks and tubs.

Is my water fluoridated?

NO! None of the public water systems add fluoride to the water in Rockland.

If I have well water how often should I test my water?

Homeowners who have a private well should test their water once a year for bacteria. Additional bacteria testing is needed if the water suddenly changes in taste, becomes discolored or develops an odor.

Should my well water be tested for anything else?

If you live near any commercial or industrial facilities, have a shallow (less than 35 feet deep) well, you may wish to have various chemical testing done on the well. Chemical testing is very expensive, and the exact chemicals to test for are best determined on a case by case basis.

If I'm on public water does my water need to be tested?

Public water is already tested extensively to meet New York State Drinking Water Requirements, both at the water source and in the water system. Additional testing should not be needed, except perhaps for lead.

Should I test my water for lead?

Natural water in the County does not contain any measurable amounts of lead. The concern is how much lead and copper may be leaching out of your plumbing into the water upon standing. In Rockland the hard water protects most of us from lead and copper by coating the insides of the pipes with minerals so that the water cannot come directly in contact with the pipes. If your house has lead plumbing,