

# Pesticides and You

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*One in a Series of NCAMP "How-to's"*

## Testing Your Water For Pesticide Contaminants

**Where do I find a laboratory to test my water to see if it's contaminated?**

Every state's agriculture or health department can test water supplies for contamination and may not charge for the service. Backlogs may cause long delays, however. For a private lab, contact the appropriate state agriculture official for a list of labs in the state certified to test drinking water.

According to EPA, at least 22 pesticides have been found in the ground water of 24 states. Only 1% of municipal

water supplies have carbon filters able to extract pesticide residues.

**What tests should I request?**

Four commonly used tests are for nitrates, bacteria, total organic carbon (TOC) and total organic halides (TOX). These can detect a wide parameter of frequently used pesticides. Request a list of the pesticides for which the company can test and check it for the chemicals used most widely in your area. Package prices are often available from testing labs.

**How do I know what the results mean?**

There are only 6 federal standards for pesticides in water currently in place (with another 29 due to be in place by 1989), as well as 62 health advisories soon to be developed. Individual states may have their own standards and health advisories. Note that health advisories are not legally enforceable standards.

**Can bottled water substitute?**

Not necessarily. While bottled water may have been treated for bacteria, it need only be tested for the six pesticides with standards (endrin, lindane, methoxychlor, toxaphene, 2,4-D and 2,4,5-TP-Silvex).