



# Nitrate in Drinking Water



## What is nitrate?

Nitrate is a chemical found in soil, water, and some foods. Drinking water standards for nitrate is 10 mg/L. Some areas have increased nitrate concentrations in water that exceed drinking water standards.

### Why is nitrate in drinking water a concern?

Nitrate can affect a person's health. Too much nitrate in your body makes it harder for red blood cells to carry oxygen, causing an illness called acute methemoglobinemia.

Nitrates can be very dangerous to infants, pregnant women, and nursing mothers. If infants are exposed to high amounts of nitrate, they may develop shortness of breath and "blue baby syndrome."

### How can nitrate get into my drinking water?

Fertilizers, manure, and waste from septic systems can be a source of nitrate. Water from rain or irrigation can carry nitrates into drinking water sources.



## What can I do?

If nitrate levels are above 10 mg/L, you should find a safe, alternate drinking water supply. The quickest thing to do is to begin using bottled water for drinking, preparing meals, and cleaning dishes.

### Will boiling my tap water help?

No. Boiling water does not reduce nitrate levels.



### What about filtering water?

Activated carbon filters, such as filters found in water pitchers or in your fridge, do not remove nitrates. Home filter systems such as a reverse osmosis unit or distillation unit have to be installed to remove nitrate from water.



## What if I have more questions?

If you are concerned about your health or the health of a family member, talk with your healthcare provider. For more information about nitrates, visit [www.trphd.ne.gov](http://www.trphd.ne.gov).

