

Healthy Indoor Environments

Where We Live, Learn and Play

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When was the last time you tested your well water?

*Written by Susie Burton Medina, CEC & FACS Extension Agent,
Banks and Habersham Counties*



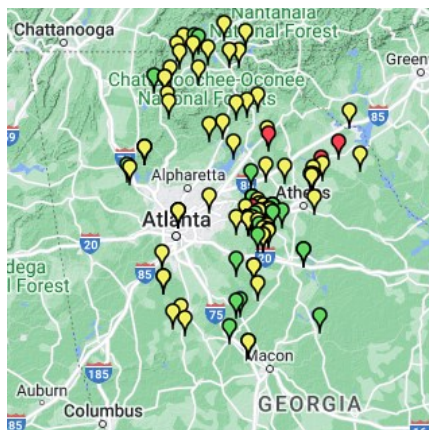
Georgia Healthy Housing
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Testing for Radon in Water

Well water may have elevated radon levels. Start by testing the air and if that result is high, consider testing the water. The yellow and red dots on the map below indicate test results that were elevated. Go to the website to learn about radon in your county and how to test (radon.uga.edu).



(Image Source: [UGA Extension AESL](https://radon.uga.edu))

There’s nothing quite like the cold, clean taste of well water. If you’re one of the 1.7 million Georgians with a private well, you probably agree. A well-constructed and maintained well can deliver problem-free, high quality drinking water for decades. However, it is important to maintain your well and test the water regularly.

The water in newly constructed wells and old wells that are being brought back into service should be tested before using them for drinking water. If you notice a change in the color, smell, or quality of your well water, you should test as soon as possible. Also, plan to test anytime a pregnant (or soon-to-be pregnant) woman or infant under the age of six months will use the well water for drinking.

Even if none of the situations above apply to your well, all private wells should be tested annually for total coliform bacteria, color and turbidity, and basic water chemistry. Test even if you don’t suspect a problem. An annual test is a snapshot in time of water quality. You should build a historical record of your water quality. If something changes in the future, it will be easier to pinpoint when that change occurred. For more information about testing your well water, contact the county Extension office. You can locate your local county office on the UGA Extension website (<https://extension.uga.edu/county-offices.html>) or call 1-800-ASK-UGA1.



(Image Source: Canva Pro)

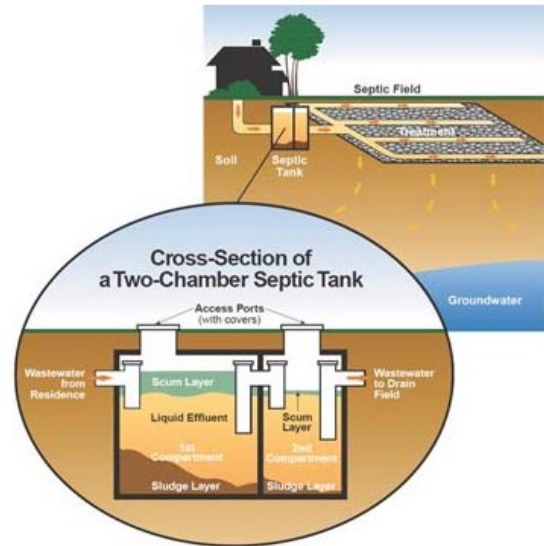
Do Your Part — Be Septic Smart

Written by Michelle May, FACS Extension Agent, Glynn and McIntosh Counties

According to the EPA (Environmental Protection Agency), more than one in five U.S. households rely on septic systems to treat their wastewater. A properly maintained septic or on-site waste treatment system safeguards your family's health, protects the environment, and can save you thousands of dollars towards repairs. Whether you flush it down the toilet, grind it in the garbage disposal or pour it down sinks and drains, it all flows into your septic tank. Knowing which products to limit or avoid in your home can help lengthen the life span of your septic system.

The materials and liquids listed below do not decompose in the septic tank and can potentially clog your system.

- Diapers
- Feminine hygiene products
- Cloth, paper towels, or baby wipes
- Pills or unused medications
- Ground up food products (be mindful of garbage disposal use)
- Kitty litter
- Coffee grinds
- Dental floss
- Cigarette butts
- Latex products



(Image Source: [UGA/CAES Water Resources Team](#))

Some other things can stress or destroy the septic system's required bacteria. This includes:

- Grease, fats & oils
- Bleach
- Drain cleaners
- Fabric softener
- Household chemicals
- Pesticides
- Disinfectants
- Gasoline
- Paint
- Antifreeze

Before you pour it down the drain or flush it, know the impact of the item on your septic system. For more septic tank care and maintenance information visit <https://www.epa.gov/septic>.

Do your part and be septic smart!

Water and Septic System Resources

- [UGA/CAES Water Resources Team](#)
- [Georgia Department of Public Health—Onsite Sewage](#)
- [UGA Extension Household Water Quality Publications](#)
- [UGA Extension A Beginner's Guide to Septic Systems](#)



(Image Source: Canva Pro)

Septic tanks should be pumped out every 3 to 7 years.



Disposing of Leftover Paints and Stains

Written by Teresa Adkins, 4-H/FACS Extension Agent, Decatur County

Beautifying one's space is usually fun and energizing, but what happens when that fresh coat of paint in your living room is completed or when the dresser found at the thrift store has been lovingly refinished? There is often leftover paint in the can or some type of finish that needs to be stored or discarded. Or perhaps you purchased or inherited a home that came with years' worth of paint cans of questionable age and quality. What is a good course of action? Don't flush it down the toilet or dump it in your yard. These actions are not good for the environment, because groundwater may become contaminated. Below are some alternative disposal methods to consider.

- If there is a large quantity of paint or finish, and it is in usable condition, you may be able to donate it to a local secondhand store or non-profit.
- Smaller amounts may be donated to a local school for use in drama, art or construction classes.
- Some county or local governments, or waste management companies, offer paint disposal sites and will take finishes and latex or water-based paints for a small fee.
- City or county governments often offer an amnesty day when paints and finishes can be disposed of at no cost.



(Image Source: Canva pro)

If you are unsure of how to dispose of these products in your community, contact your waste management company for more information.

Disposing of Paints and Stains with Trash

Sometimes paints, stains, and other products like paint thinners can be placed in the trash for disposal, if they are in a solid state. Check with your local trash company for guidelines on disposing of paints and stains with regular trash. The Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD) provides the following guidelines for disposing of paint and stain with trash.



(Image Source: pixabay.com)

- ◆ Check with your local trash company for guidelines on disposing of paints and stains with the regular trash.
- ◆ In an outdoor setting, while wearing eye protection and rubber gloves, mix paint/finishes with either sawdust, shredded newspaper, kitty litter or a product called oil dry. Use enough to absorb all the liquid and then double bag before placing in the trash can.
- ◆ Runny liquids like paint thinner can easily be evaporated outdoors, away from play and work areas. Open the container and leave it outdoors to evaporate. Alternatively, you could pour the product into disposable aluminum pans and leave them outside to evaporate. Make sure to double trash bags before inserting containers.

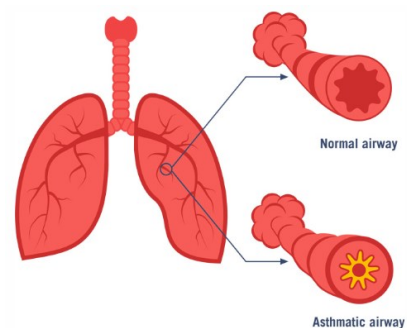
Always check with your local government to learn more about disposing of hazardous household waste in your community. For more information visit the [Georgia Environmental Protection Division](#). Another helpful resource is [Earth 911](#).



Celebrate National Children's Health Month and World Environmental Health Day

October is National Children's Health Month. It's a time to identify and reduce the health hazards children encounter in homes and at school, including environmental hazards like mold and lead paint. During October, take steps to protect children from asthma triggers and lead poisoning. For more information, refer to the UGA Extension publication—[Breathe Easy: Understanding and Controlling Asthma](#) and the [CDC's Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention program](#).

The International Federation of Environmental Health has declared September 26 World Environmental Health Day. The theme for the day is "Global Environmental Public Health: Standing up to protect everyone's Health each and every day." It's a time to recognize and address both natural and human-made causes of environmental health challenges. For more information and ideas for marking this day, check out [the World Environmental Health Day website](#).



(Image Source: [UGA Extension](#))

Healthy Home Hacks

~ Pamela Turner, UGA Extension Housing and Indoor Environment Specialist
~ Diane Bales, UGA Extension Human Development Specialist

Remove water marks from wood with a dab of mayonnaise. Use a soft cloth to apply the mayonnaise. Rub with the wood grain. For stubborn stains let the mayonnaise sit on the water mark for about two hours then use a soft cloth to remove it.

Reduce lead poisoning hazards by not using imported pottery containers and dishes for food storage. Avoid using old fiesta ware and some older plasticware because they may contain lead.

Limescale on your tub or shower can be removed with a 50/50 mixture of white vinegar and water. Rinse with plain water.

Remove pet hair from clothes and furniture with a dryer sheet.

Run the bathroom fan for 20 minutes after a shower to vent out the moisture.

Rubbing your hands along a stainless steel faucet will remove the garlic smell.



UGA Extension [Healthy Indoor Environments](#)
(healthyhomes.uga.edu)



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