

Don't Drink Water from Roadside Springs

- [Don't Drink Water from Roadside Springs](#) is available in Portable Document Format (PDF).
- Roadside springs can contain bacteria and other substances that can make you sick.
- Whenever possible, people should drink from a regulated public water supply system or a properly installed and maintained private well.
- Contact your [Local Health Department](#) to learn about other options for your drinking water.



That spring water might not be as safe as you think!

Some communities have a local spring that residents use to collect water for drinking, cooking and other household purposes. Springs occur where underground water comes out near the ground surface. Although the water may look pure and clean, it might not be. Often it is unknown what the source of the water is, or where it has traveled before being collected. A spring might flow above ground, allowing animal waste or chemicals to run into the water.

Why should I stop drinking spring or untreated surface water?

By the time the spring reaches a collection point, it could have chemicals, bacteria, parasites and viruses in it that might make people sick. Waterborne organisms (*Cryptosporidium*, *Giardia* and *E. coli*) can cause symptoms such as nausea, vomiting and diarrhea. Spring water could also contain chemicals that can cause long-term health effects, such as kidney and liver damage, nervous system disorders and birth defects. The health effects of drinking contaminated water can be more severe, even life threatening, for babies, children, the elderly and immune-compromised individuals.

Do you really want to drink that water?

The New York State Health Department recommends that no one should use roadside springs and other uncontrolled, untreated water sources for drinking water. Roadside springs are generally not protected from contamination and are not routinely tested. Instead, drink water from either a regulated public water system that is required to treat, disinfect and monitor its water on a regular basis, or from a properly installed and maintained drinking water supply well. New York State Health Department certified bottled water is another alternative.

Ask for help!

Contact your [local health department](#) if your home or workplace is not served by a public water system or an on-site drilled well. If there are no other water supply sources that can be used, local health department staff can discuss treatment and other possible water sources for drinking and cooking.



Never use water from a roadside spring or an untreated surface water to prepare baby formula or nutritional supplements for elderly or immune-compromised individuals.