

Disinfecting Wells and Water Systems with Liquid Laundry Bleach

The following “recipe” for disinfecting wells and water systems that you think may be contaminated with bacteria was excerpted from the Federal Emergency Management Agency’s *Flood Emergency and Residential Repair Handbook*, March 1986.

The first step is to determine the volume of water in the well. The table below gives the number of gallons for each pool of water standing in the well.

Diameter of well	4”	5”	6”	8”	10”	12”	16”	24”	36”	48”
Gallons of water for each foot of water standing in well	0.7	1.0	1.5	2.6	4.1	5.9	10.4	23.5	52.9	94.0

Multiply the bottom figure (gallons of water) times the number of feet of water standing in your well to obtain the total gallons of water in the well. For example, an 8-inch diameter well with 20 feet of water will contain about 52 gallons of water (2.6 times 20).

Multiply the number of gallons of water in the well times 0.25 to obtain the number of fluid ounces of 5.25% liquid chlorine laundry bleach¹ to be used or refer to the following table:

For disinfection strength about 100 parts per million:

Gallons of water in the well	10	20	40	80	100
Fluid ounces of chlorine laundry bleach (5.25%)	2.5	5.0	10.0	20.0	25.5

For each additional 100 gallons, use 25 fluid ounces of bleach.

Add the total amount of bleach to at least 5 gallons of water. Pour the bleach/water solution into the well, making certain to wet interior surfaces of the well casing and the drop pipe. If possible, agitate the water in the well to ensure mixing.

Let solution stand for 12 hours in all wells except dug wells. For dug wells, let the solution stand for 24 hours prior to flushing.

Pump treated water from the well. If possible, recirculate pumped water back into the well for 30 minutes.

Pump treated water into the house’s pressure system, open outlets or faucets until each outlet gives a strong odor of chlorine; then closes outlets. Make certain the water heater tank has been filled with treated water by checking hot water outlets as well as cold.

Let chlorine solution stand in the pressure system for one hour.

Flush the system by running water from each outlet until both chlorine odor and taste have disappeared. Drain the hot water heater to remove any accumulated silt or heavy impurities.

¹ Make certain that the label specifies 5.25% sodium hypochlorite solution with no additional active ingredients.