The Best Water Testing Kits To Ensure Safe Drinking At Home

Woman thoughtfully drinking water

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From natural disasters that can damage water systems to saltwater intrusion in coastal areas, there are lots of reasons to be concerned about drinking water quality. A water testing kit may help provide you with peace of mind. However, they're not created equal, and it's important to choose the right one.

The EPA recommends regularly testing water from a well or private source, while public water supplies are meant to be tested for you. However, when crises like floods or fires damage public water systems, you may feel concerned that the water isn't safe. It's wise to keep a source of fresh bottled water at home, especially if you live in a natural disaster-prone area. Yet whether you're on private or public water, water testing kits can help you know if your tap water is safe to drink.

There are two types of testing kits — those you read at home, and those you send away to a lab. Laboratory water tests are more thorough and accurate than a home kit. A home testing kit can be a helpful first line of defense before you pay for a lab test. Then, if you have doubts about your water quality after using a home kit, you can send the water to an accredited lab for a final analysis.

How we selected products

Testing water in vial

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Your state's government or health department should offer guidelines on finding a state-accredited water testing lab. However, those labs can be expensive, and the results can take a long time to arrive. So, some people may choose to pursue a water test on their own. Our recommended test kits are chosen based on accuracy and ease of use. It's critical to choose a testing method that gives accurate results, so you don't get false information about your home water quality. However, even an accurate method can be misread if the kit is too hard to use correctly. So, we've left out the more complex at-home kits, even though they may technically work.

Most of these kits will need to be sent out to a lab. Lab testing is more effective and reduces the risk of error, so they feature more frequently on our recommended list. On a related note, it's important to be wary of home water testing scams, such as those perpetuated by door-to-door salespeople promoting water filters. Our list will help you avoid scams and invest in water testing kits that really work.

Best overall: Tap Score

Taking test kit from mailbox

Tap Score

Tap Score uses a network of specialist water labs, and will send the sample from your home to the lab best-suited to test it. They offer tests for different water systems, including wells and city water. Their

contaminant glossary lets you search by contaminant concern for specialized tests. However, their core kits are the best way to get an overview of your water quality. They even have at-home kits — though these are intended to supplement the lab results, not replace them.

Buy a test to meet your needs from Tap Score starting at $52.

Best for city water: Watercheck CityCheck

Two versions of CityCheck tester

Watercheck

Well water should always be tested routinely, so many well owners already have a water testing system in place. People drinking municipal tap water, however, may not know where to turn when they're concerned about water safety. Watercheck's CityCheck testing kit offers a solution. Their kit sends your sample to the National Testing Laboratories, an independent lab system that specializes in drinking water tests. While basic and standard are more affordable choices, the deluxe version is their most comprehensive option. No matter which you choose, the report provided will help you understand the results.

Try a CityCheck option from Watercheck starting at $195.

Best budget: Safe Home Water Test Kits

Safe Home drinking water test

Safe Home

Ideally, money would be no concern when it comes to testing your drinking water. However, if funds are tight, Safe Home's water test options can help you learn about your water quality for a lower price. They offer a range of kits that target various contamination concerns, like bacteria, lead, and arsenic, so you can pick what you need instead of paying for a comprehensive review (though they do offer a pricier comprehensive test, too). They also have in-home test kits, though most prices aren't much lower than the lab kits, so you'll likely want to opt for in-lab testing.

Shop a selection of Water Test Kits from Safe Home starting at $12.99.

Best for PFAS: Cyclopure Water Test Kit

Cyclopure Water Test Kit

Cyclopure

As a general rule, it's good to be wary of test kits from companies that sell water filtration or purification systems. They have an incentive to show your water as contaminated, so they can sell more products. That said, Maine-based watershed conservation group [Friends of Merrymeeting Bay](#) did a comparison of Cyclopure's PFAS test kit and three accredited state labs. They found that Cyclopure's results were similar to or better than the lab results, for a much lower price. While state labs are still typically more reliable than for-profit companies, this option may work well if you're concerned both about PFAS and saving money.

Pick up a PFAS Water Test Kit from Cyclopure for $79.

Best at-home: Varify Complete Drinking Water Test Kit

Varify Drinking Water Test Kit

Varify

While a home test can never replicate lab-quality information, it may help you decide whether a lab test will be worthwhile. The affordable Varify kit comes with 100 color-coded test strips, a test vial, and two tests for bacteria. In addition to contamination, it can tell you things like the hardness of your water. You just dip the strip, wait for one minute, and then check the strip colors against the provided chart to see what's in your water. If you see something concerning, consider pursuing a lab test next to confirm, since even this high-quality home kit can be fallible (for example, the colors of the results can be hard to read accurately).

Try the Complete Drinking Water Test Kit from Varify for $27.95.

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