



**Presented By**  
**Plymouth Water Division**

ANNUAL  
**WATER  
QUALITY  
REPORT**

WATER TESTING PERFORMED IN 2017

## Quality First

Once again, we are pleased to present our annual water quality report. As in years past, we are committed to delivering the best-quality drinking water possible. To that end, we remain vigilant in meeting the challenges of new regulations, source water protection, water conservation, and community outreach and education while continuing to serve the needs of all our water users. Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to serve you and your family.

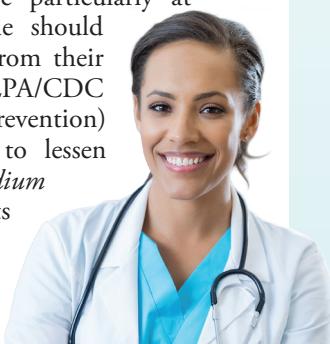
We encourage you to share your thoughts with us on the information contained in this report. After all, well-informed customers are our best allies.

## Where Does My Water Come From?

The Town of Plymouth's municipal water supply consists of two aquifers and 12 gravel-packed wells at ten locations throughout Plymouth. The Plymouth Water Division spends more than \$60,000 annually testing its water to ensure water quality and to continue its mission to provide the highest quality drinking water and fire protection at the lowest possible cost to the ratepayers. The Plymouth water system serves the entire northern section of town between Federal Furnace Road and the Kingston and Carver boundaries, Plymouth Center, Chiltonville, Manomet, and Cedarville areas east of Route 3 south to the Bourne town line.

## Important Health Information

Some people may be more vulnerable to contaminants in drinking water than the general population. Immunocompromised persons such as persons with cancer undergoing chemotherapy, persons who have undergone organ transplants, people with HIV/AIDS or other immune system disorders, some elderly, and infants may be particularly at risk from infections. These people should seek advice about drinking water from their health care providers. The U.S. EPA/CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) guidelines on appropriate means to lessen the risk of infection by *Cryptosporidium* and other microbial contaminants are available from the Safe Drinking Water Hotline at (800) 426-4791 or <http://water.epa.gov/drink/hotline>.



## Substances That Could Be in Water

To ensure that tap water is safe to drink, the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA) prescribes regulations limiting the amount of certain contaminants in water provided by public water systems. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) regulations establish limits for contaminants in bottled water, which must provide the same protection for public health. Drinking water, including bottled water, may reasonably be expected to contain at least small amounts of some contaminants. The presence of these contaminants does not necessarily indicate that the water poses a health risk.

The sources of drinking water (both tap water and bottled water) include rivers, lakes, streams, ponds, reservoirs, springs, and wells. As water travels over the surface of the land or through the ground, it dissolves naturally occurring minerals and, in some cases, radioactive material, and can pick up substances resulting from the presence of animals or from human activity. Substances that may be present in source water include:

Microbial Contaminants, such as viruses and bacteria, which may come from sewage treatment plants, septic systems, agricultural livestock operations, or wildlife;

Inorganic Contaminants, such as salts and metals, which can be naturally occurring or may result from urban stormwater runoff, industrial or domestic wastewater discharges, oil and gas production, mining, or farming;

Pesticides and Herbicides, which may come from a variety of sources such as agriculture, urban stormwater runoff, and residential uses;

Organic Chemical Contaminants, including synthetic and volatile organic chemicals, which are by-products of industrial processes and petroleum production, and which may also come from gas stations, urban stormwater runoff, and septic systems;

Radioactive Contaminants, which can be naturally occurring or may be the result of oil and gas production and mining activities.

More information about contaminants and potential health effects can be obtained by calling the U.S. EPA's Safe Drinking Water Hotline at (800) 426-4791.

## Source Water Assessment

A Source Water Assessment Plan (SWAP) is now available at our office. This plan is an assessment of the delineated area around our listed sources through which contaminants, if present, could migrate and reach our source water. It also includes an inventory of potential sources of contamination within the delineated area, and a determination of the water supply's susceptibility to contamination by the identified potential sources.

According to the Source Water Assessment Plan, our water system had a susceptibility rating of "medium." If you would like to review our "Source Water Assessment Plan" go to [www.mass.gov/eea/docs/dep/water/drinkling/sero/4239000.pdf](http://www.mass.gov/eea/docs/dep/water/drinkling/sero/4239000.pdf), or feel free to contact our office during regular office hours.

## Water Conservation

You can play a role in conserving water and saving yourself money in the process by becoming conscious of the amount of water your household is using and by looking for ways to use less whenever you can. It is not hard to conserve water. Here are a few tips:

- Automatic dishwashers use 15 gallons for every cycle, regardless of how many dishes are loaded. So get a run for your money and load it to capacity.
- Turn off the tap when brushing your teeth.
- Check every faucet in your home for leaks. Just a slow drip can waste 15 to 20 gallons a day. Fix it and you can save almost 6,000 gallons per year.
- Check your toilets for leaks by putting a few drops of food coloring in the tank. Watch for a few minutes to see if the color shows up in the bowl. It is not uncommon to lose up to 100 gallons a day from an invisible toilet leak. Fix it and you save more than 30,000 gallons a year.
- Use your water meter to detect hidden leaks. Simply turn off all taps and water-using appliances. Then check the meter after 15 minutes. If it moved, you have a leak.

Water treatment is a complex, time-consuming process.

## Water Treatment Process

The ground water is naturally corrosive, so we add sodium hydroxide (used to adjust the pH to 8.5). Chlorine is then added as a precaution against any bacteria that may be present. (We carefully monitor the amount of chlorine, adding the lowest quantity necessary to protect the safety of your water without compromising taste.) Finally, some wells get a phosphate blend (for iron and manganese sequestering) before pumping to water storage tanks and into your home or business.

## Water Main Flushing

Distribution mains (pipes) convey water to homes, businesses, and hydrants in your neighborhood. The water entering distribution mains is of very high quality; however, water quality can deteriorate in areas of the distribution mains over time. Water main flushing is the process of cleaning the interior of water distribution mains by sending a rapid flow of water through the mains.

Flushing maintains water quality in several ways. For example, flushing removes sediments like iron and manganese. Although iron and manganese do not pose health concerns, they can affect the taste, clarity, and color of the water. Additionally, sediments can shield microorganisms from the disinfecting power of chlorine, contributing to the growth of microorganisms within distribution mains. Flushing helps remove stale water and ensures the presence of fresh water with sufficient dissolved oxygen, disinfectant levels, and an acceptable taste and smell.

During flushing operations in your neighborhood, some short-term deterioration of water quality, though uncommon, is possible. You should avoid tap water for household uses at that time. If you do use the tap, allow your cold water to run for a few minutes at full velocity before use and avoid using hot water, to prevent sediment accumulation in your hot water tank.

Please contact us if you have any questions or if you would like more information on our water main flushing schedule.

## QUESTIONS?

For more information about this report, or for any questions relating to your drinking water, please call Peter Gordon, Plymouth Water Division Water Quality Manager, at (508) 830-4162 x141.

## Protecting Your Water

Bacteria are a natural and important part of our world. There are around 40 trillion bacteria living in each of us; without them, we would not be able to live healthy lives. Coliform bacteria are common in the environment and are generally not harmful themselves. The presence of this bacterial form in drinking water is a concern, however, because it indicates that the water may be contaminated with other organisms that can cause disease.



In 2016, the U.S. EPA passed a new regulation called the Revised Total Coliform Rule, which requires additional steps that water systems must take to ensure the integrity of the drinking water distribution system by monitoring for the presence of bacteria like total coliform and *E. coli*. The rule requires more stringent standards than the previous regulation, and it requires water systems that may be vulnerable to contamination to have in place procedures that will minimize the incidence of contamination. Water systems that exceed a specified frequency of total coliform occurrences are required to conduct an assessment of their system and correct any problems quickly. The U.S. EPA anticipates greater public health protection under the new regulation due to its more preventive approach to identifying and fixing problems that may affect public health.

Although we have been fortunate to have the highest-quality drinking water, our goal is to eliminate all potential pathways of contamination into our distribution system, and this new rule helps us to accomplish that goal.

## What's a Cross-connection?

Cross-connections that contaminate drinking water distribution lines are a major concern. A cross-connection is formed at any point where a drinking water line connects to equipment (boilers), systems containing chemicals (air conditioning systems, fire sprinkler systems, irrigation systems) or water sources of questionable quality. Cross-connection contamination can occur when the pressure in the equipment or system is greater than the pressure inside the drinking water line (backpressure). Contamination can also occur when the pressure in the drinking water line drops due to fairly routine occurrences (main breaks, heavy water demand) causing contaminants to be sucked out from the equipment and into the drinking water line (backsiphonage).

Outside water taps and garden hoses tend to be the most common sources of cross-connection contamination at home. The garden hose creates a hazard when submerged in a swimming pool or when attached to a chemical sprayer for weed killing. Garden hoses that are left lying on the ground may be contaminated by fertilizers, cesspools or garden chemicals. Improperly installed valves in your toilet could also be a source of cross-connection contamination.

Community water supplies are continuously jeopardized by cross-connections unless appropriate valves, known as backflow prevention devices, are installed and maintained. We have surveyed industrial, commercial, and institutional facilities in the service area to make sure that potential cross-connections are identified and eliminated or protected by a backflow preventer. We also inspect and test backflow preventers to make sure that they provide maximum protection.

For more information on backflow prevention contact the Safe Drinking Water Hotline at (800) 426-4791.

## Lead in Home Plumbing

If present, elevated levels of lead can cause serious health problems, especially for pregnant women and young children. Lead in drinking water is primarily from materials and components associated with service lines and home plumbing. We are responsible for providing high-quality drinking water, but cannot control the variety of materials used in plumbing components. When your water has been sitting for several hours, you can minimize the potential for lead exposure by flushing your tap for 30 seconds to 2 minutes before using water for drinking or cooking. If you are concerned about lead in your water, you may wish to have your water tested. Information on lead in drinking water, testing methods, and steps you can take to minimize exposure is available from the Safe Drinking Water Hotline or at [www.epa.gov/lead](http://www.epa.gov/lead).

## Tip Top Tap

The most common signs that your faucet or sink is affecting the quality of your drinking water are discolored water, sink or faucet stains, a buildup of particles, unusual odors or tastes, and a reduced flow of water. The solutions to these problems may be in your hands.



### Kitchen Sink and Drain

Hand washing, soap scum buildup, and the handling of raw meats and vegetables can contaminate your sink. Clogged drains can lead to unclean sinks and backed up water in which bacteria (i.e., pink and black-colored slime growth) can grow and contaminate the sink area and faucet, causing a rotten egg odor. Disinfect and clean the sink and drain area regularly. Also, flush regularly with hot water.

### Faucets, Screens, and Aerators

Chemicals and bacteria can splash and accumulate on the faucet screen and aerator, which are located on the tip of faucets, and can collect particles like sediment and minerals, resulting in a decreased flow from the faucet. Clean and disinfect the aerators or screens on a regular basis.

Check with your plumber if you find particles in the faucet screen as they could be pieces of plastic from the hot water heater dip tube. Faucet gaskets can break down and cause black, oily slime. If you find this slime, replace the faucet gasket with a higher-quality product. White scaling or hard deposits on faucets and shower heads may be caused by hard water or water with high levels of calcium carbonate. Clean these fixtures with vinegar or use water softening to reduce the calcium carbonate levels for the hot water system.

### Water Filtration/Treatment Devices

A smell of rotten eggs can be a sign of bacteria on the filters or in the treatment system. The system can also become clogged over time so regular filter replacement is important. (Remember to replace your refrigerator filter!)



## BY THE NUMBERS

The number of gallons of water produced daily by public water systems in the U.S.

**34 BILLION**

The number of miles of drinking water distribution mains in the U.S.

**135 BILLION**

The number of Americans who receive water from a public water system.

The age in years of the world's oldest water found in a mine at a depth of nearly two miles.

**2 BILLION**

The number of active public water systems in the U.S.

The number of highly trained and licensed water professionals serving in the U.S.

**199 THOUSAND**

The number of federally regulated contaminants tested for in drinking water.

**93**

## Test Results

Our water is monitored for many different kinds of substances on a very strict sampling schedule. The information in the data tables shows only those substances that were detected between January 1 and December 31, 2017. Remember that detecting a substance does not necessarily mean the water is unsafe to drink; our goal is to keep all detects below their respective maximum allowed levels. The State recommends monitoring for certain substances less than once per year because the concentrations of these substances do not change frequently. In these cases, the most recent sample data are included, along with the year in which the sample was taken.

We participated in the 3rd stage of the EPA's Unregulated Contaminant Monitoring Rule (UCMR3) program by performing additional tests on our drinking water. UCMR3 benefits the environment and public health by providing the EPA with data on the occurrence of contaminants suspected to be in drinking water, to determine if the EPA needs to introduce new regulatory standards to improve drinking water quality. Contact us for more information on this program.

REGULATED SUBSTANCES							
Substance (Unit of Measure)	Year Sampled	MCL [MRDL]	MCLG [MRDLG]	Amount Detected	Range Low-High	Violation	Typical Source
Barium (ppm)	2017	2	2	0.007	0.003–0.074	No	Discharge of drilling wastes; Discharge from metal refineries; Erosion of natural deposits
Chlorine (ppm)	2017	4.0	4.0	0.53	0.04–0.53	No	Water additive used to control microbes
Nitrate (ppm)	2017	10	10	1.96	0.10–1.96	No	Runoff from fertilizer use; Leaching from septic tanks, sewage; Erosion of natural deposits
TTHMs [Total Trihalomethanes] (ppb)	2017	80	NA	20.5	3.22–20.5	No	By-product of drinking water disinfection
Trichloroethylene (ppb)	2017	5	0	1.07	0.73–1.07	No	Discharge from metal degreasing sites and other factories
Tap water samples were collected for lead and copper analyses from sample sites throughout the community							
Substance (Unit of Measure)	Year Sampled	AL	MCLG	Amount Detected (90th%tile)	Sites Above AL/ Total Sites	Violation	Typical Source
Copper (ppm)	2016	1.3	1.3	0.060	0/30	No	Corrosion of household plumbing systems; Erosion of natural deposits
Lead (ppb)	2016	15	0	2	0/30	No	Corrosion of household plumbing systems; Erosion of natural deposits
SECONDARY SUBSTANCES							
Substance (Unit of Measure)	Year Sampled	SMCL	MCLG	Amount Detected	Range Low-High	Violation	Typical Source
Aluminum (ppb)	2017	200	NA	23	NA	No	Erosion of natural deposits; Residual from some surface water treatment processes
Chloride (ppm)	2017	250	NA	180	NA	No	Runoff/leaching from natural deposits
Copper (ppm)	2017	1.0	NA	0.060	0.00–2,810	No	Corrosion of household plumbing systems; Erosion of natural deposits
Iron (ppb)	2017	300	NA	330	0.0–2,810	No	Leaching from natural deposits; Industrial wastes
Manganese <sup>1</sup> (ppb)	2017	50	NA	141	NA	No	Leaching from natural deposits
Sulfate (ppm)	2017	250	NA	8.3	NA	No	Runoff/leaching from natural deposits; Industrial wastes
UNREGULATED SUBSTANCES <sup>2</sup>							
Substance (Unit of Measure)	Year Sampled	Amount Detected		Range Low-High		Typical Source	
Bromodichloromethane (ppb)	2017	1.05		NA		By-product of drinking water disinfection	
Chloroform (ppb)	2017	0.51		NA		By-product of drinking water disinfection	
Sodium <sup>3</sup> (ppm)	2017	29.44		12.4–91.4		Naturally occurring	

### UNREGULATED CONTAMINANT MONITORING RULE - PART 3 (UCMR3)<sup>2</sup>

SUBSTANCE (UNIT OF MEASURE)	YEAR SAMPLED	AMOUNT DETECTED	RANGE LOW-HIGH
Chlorate (ppb)	2015	200	NA
Chromium [Total] (ppb)	2015	0.32	NA
Strontium (ppb)	2015	130	NA

<sup>1</sup> Manganese is a naturally occurring mineral found in rocks, soil, ground water, and surface water. Manganese is necessary for proper nutrition and is part of a healthy diet, but can have undesirable effects on certain sensitive populations at elevated concentrations. The U.S. EPA and MADEP have established public health advisory levels for manganese to protect against concerns of potential neurological effects.

<sup>2</sup> Unregulated contaminants are those for which the U.S. EPA has not established drinking water standards. The purpose of unregulated contaminant monitoring is to assist the U.S. EPA in determining their occurrence in drinking water and whether future regulation is warranted.

<sup>3</sup> Office of Research and Standards Guideline (ORSG) = 20 ppm.

## Definitions

**90th Percentile:** Out of every 10 homes sampled, 9 were at or below this level. This number is compared to the Action Level to determine lead and copper compliance.

**AL (Action Level):** The concentration of a contaminant which, if exceeded, triggers treatment or other requirements which a water system must follow.

**MCL (Maximum Contaminant Level):** The highest level of a contaminant that is allowed in drinking water. MCLs are set as close to the MCLGs as feasible using the best available treatment technology.

**MCLG (Maximum Contaminant Level Goal):** The level of a contaminant in drinking water below which there is no known or expected risk to health. MCLGs allow for a margin of safety.

**MRDL (Maximum Residual Disinfectant Level):** The highest level of a disinfectant allowed in drinking water. There is convincing evidence that addition of a disinfectant is necessary for control of microbial contaminants.

**MRDLG (Maximum Residual Disinfectant Level Goal):** The level of a drinking water disinfectant below which there is no known or expected risk to health. MRDLGs do not reflect the benefits of the use of disinfectants to control microbial contaminants.

**NA:** Not applicable

**ORSG:** Massachusetts Office of Research and Standards Guideline.

**ppb (parts per billion):** One part substance per billion parts water (or micrograms per liter).

**ppm (parts per million):** One part substance per million parts water (or milligrams per liter).

**SMCL (Secondary Maximum Contaminant Level):** SMCLs are established to regulate the aesthetics of drinking water like appearance, taste and odor.