

HomePro Inspections Instructions for sanitizing a well

The procedure for cleaning and sanitizing a water well and plumbing system with chlorine is called shock chlorination. Shock chlorination kills disease-causing organisms. Treatment should be done any time construction or repair work is done on the plumbing system, if flood or surface water gets into the well, or if a test for bacteria indicates "unsatisfactory" levels of coliform bacteria.

Follow the steps below to kill the bacteria and reduce the risk of reinfection.

1. Look in your yard, basement or well house for a 6-inch diameter pipe sticking up out of the ground. Newer wells look similar to Figure 1 and older wells look similar to Figure 2. Gather whatever information you can about the well, such as age, actual diameter, total depth, casing depth, and standing water level. The well driller, pump installer or previous homeowner can be sources of this information.

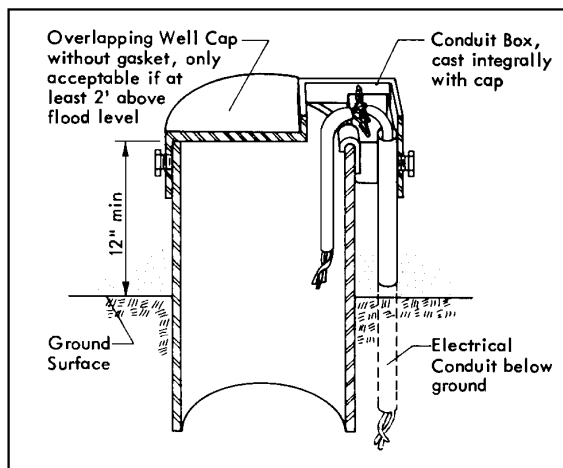


Fig. 1. Overlapping well cap with skirted sides on well with pitless adapter.

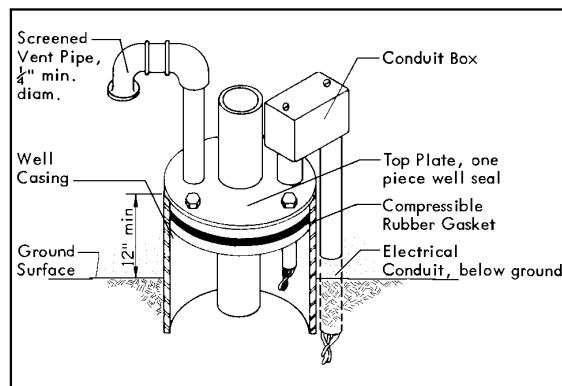


Fig. 2. Well seal with compressible rubber gasket.

2. Remove the well cap by loosening the screws (if like Fig. 1) or unscrew the vent pipe (if like Fig. 2). Thoroughly scrub all accessible surfaces of the well using 1/2 gallon unscented chlorine (laundry) bleach per 5 gallons of water. Check the bleach label to be sure it contains 5.25% sodium hypochlorite. Wear rubber gloves and goggles to protect your skin from irritation. Rinse everything with clean water.
3. In a clean plastic 5-gallon bucket, add chlorine bleach at a rate of 1 gallon of bleach per 100 feet of water depth in the well. Then mix the chlorine with plain water by filling the bucket with water. Maximum of 3 gallons should be used. For example, a 250-foot deep, 6-inch diameter house well with a water level of 100 feet would require 1 gallon of bleach to treat the 100-foot column of water in the well. Pour the mixture down the well hole.
4. Connect a garden hose to a nearby faucet and wash down the inside of the well. Let the water run until a strong chlorine odor comes out the hose. Shut off that faucet, then one by one, open all other faucets and flush toilets in your plumbing system until they smell of chlorine. If a strong odor is not detected, add more chlorine to the well. Chlorinate water softeners and iron or sand filters according to the manufacturer's directions. Don't chlorinate carbon or charcoal filters because it will use up their capacity.
5. Replace the well cap or vent pipe. Let the chlorinated water stand in the system at least 12 hours, to give the chlorine time to kill the bacteria. After this waiting period, turn on the faucets to flush the system of remaining chlorine. Start with outside faucets first to avoid overloading the septic system. Let the water run until there is no detectable chlorine odor.
6. Retest for bacteria after 7-10 days of use. If the well fails two consecutive tests, continuous disinfection may be necessary. Keep all test results with your important papers to document changes over time.