

SPLASH INTO EXTENSION

Water is Nebraska's most important natural resource. University of Nebraska-Lincoln research, extension, and teaching experts from many water-related disciplines are developing this water web site to help you learn about – and develop a greater appreciation of – water. Check it out at water.unl.edu

Question: Our Well Water Tested High for TDS. Is this a Health Concern?

The following answer was provided by Nebraska Extension Educator Sharon Skipton and Nebraska Extension Specialist Bruce Dvorak.

TDS stands for total dissolved solids. It is a measure of the total concentration of dissolved substances in water. A high concentration of total dissolved solids does not necessarily indicate a health hazard.

To evaluate potential health risks associated with high TDS, you must evaluate the concentration of each dissolved solid. For example, the dissolved solids might include calcium and magnesium (hard water) which could be beneficial, contributing to the total calcium and magnesium needed in the human diet. On the other hand, the dissolved solids might include nitrate, which could present a health risk if present in high enough concentrations.

High TDS can affect the taste of the water. High amounts of chlorides result in a salty or brackish taste and can increase the corrosivity of the water (which could include increased lead or copper concentrations). High bicarbonate concentrations (often measured as alkalinity) may result in a bitter taste and may increase the amount of mineral scale formed in pipes and plumbing fixtures.

Therefore, it is important to search beyond the TDS concentration to understand which specific substances are present and at what concentrations. Check your water test results for specific substances that could be contributing to the TDS concentration. If you are unsure which substances listed on your water test report might be included in the TDS concentration, you can call the laboratory that tested the water and ask for clarification. Also, ask if they would recommend additional tests for substances not analyzed in your original water test.



Did You Know

The brain is made up of roughly 75% water.