

BEST PRACTICES



Household Tips to Protect Our Water from Nitrates

Nitrate is a chemical found in fertilizers, animal manure and human waste. It can also occur naturally in soil. Nitrates also travel through the soil down into groundwater, which is the main source of our drinking water here in Thurston County.

Because exposure to nitrates can reduce the ability of red blood cells to carry oxygen, it can be a serious health threat, especially to pregnant women, the elderly and infants. For this reason, it is important to take steps in our homes and yards to prevent possible future contamination to our waters.



Follow these tips:

- **Use fertilizer sparingly**
 - Test your soil to determine the amount of fertilizer needed
 - Fertilizer with the proper amount once in fall and/or spring, if needed
- **Water wisely**
 - Limit watering of lawns to one inch of water per week
 - Aerate your lawn to encourage water to seep into roots
- **Dispose of pet waste properly**
 - Always pick up and bag dog poop and place in trash
 - Always bag litter from cats and other small pets and place in trash
 - Drain aquariums to the sanitary sewer through a toilet or sink, if possible
- **Manage hobby farm manure**
 - Pick up manure and keep it off the ground and under cover
 - For free help to manage manure and improve pastures, contact Thurston Conservation District at www.thurstoned.com or 360-754-3588
- **Maintain your home's sewer system**
 - Only flush what comes out of your body and toilet paper
 - Call a plumber if you notice any unusual wet spots and/or odors in your home or yard
- **Maintain your home's septic system**
 - Have septic systems inspected and pumped a minimum of every 3-5 years
 - Hook up to public sewer system, if available, for more effective treatment

Visit www.epa.gov/safewater to learn more about nitrates in drinking water.

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