

Help Keep Drinking Water Clean
Information from the Union of Concerned Scientists
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Help preserve and avoid contaminating our water supply through the following actions.

1. Avoid using chemical pesticides and fertilizers in your lawn or garden, which can be washed out by rain and end up in nearby lakes and streams. If you do use chemicals, use the minimum amount needed.
2. Use porous materials (such as wood, brick and gravel) for decks, patios, and walkways. Unlike concrete, these materials soak up rain and help reduce runoff.
3. Seek natural alternatives to cleaning products that contain toxic chemicals. If you buy commercial cleaning products, purchase those labeled "biodegradable" or "non-toxic." Avoid products containing chlorine bleach.
4. Dispose of toxic waste properly. See the UUSJ piece on household hazardous waste disposal in northeastern Illinois, or ask you local government about disposal programs for household toxic waste.
5. Incorporate water-efficient: appliances, plumbing and water-use practices in your home. See the UUSJ piece on Water Conservation at Home for tips.
6. If you own a septic system, maintain it properly – septic system failures are a major source of ground-water pollution and can cause waterborne illnesses.
7. Buy organic food whenever possible. Agriculture is the single biggest source of water pollution, but organic food crops are grown without the use of chemical pesticides and fertilizers.
8. If you are connected to a public water supply, you have the legal right to request a yearly water quality report describing the source of the water, which contaminants are tested, and how the water is treated to reduce or eliminate those contaminants.
9. If you use well water or are connected to a private water supply, it is your responsibility to have your water tested regularly.
10. If you have small children, test your water – regardless of the source – for lead, a contaminant that can cause neurological problems. Lead is present in some household plumbing and can contaminate your water *even if the water supply is clean.*