



Prescriptions for PREVENTION

Guidance from the Western States
Pediatric Environmental Health Specialty Unit



Nitrates in Food and Water



Did you know?

Nitrates leach into the soil and water from fertilizers, manure, and septic tanks. Nitrates are also found in food with preservatives. They can enter an infant's body through drinking water and can cause "blue baby syndrome", which can be deadly.



Do

- Test for high levels of nitrates if you use well water
- All public water supplies are required to provide an annual water quality report.
 - Read your local report to determine if nitrate levels are too high (above the Maximum Contaminant Level of 10 mg/L).
- If nitrates are present at a high level in your water, treat your water with a home water distiller, a reverse osmosis filter, or an ion exchange filter to remove nitrates
- Eat whole foods like fruits, vegetables, and whole grains whenever possible. Nitrates cannot be used in organic foods.
- Eat a diet high in antioxidants - these reduce the risks of nitrates.



Don't

- Don't frequently eat processed foods & cured meat like hot dogs, sausage or cold cuts with nitrate preservatives
- Don't boil water to try to remove nitrates. This increases nitrate concentration!
- Don't use untested private well water or water with high levels of nitrates to:
 - Dilute infant formula or make baby food
 - Drink or prepare foods for pregnant people (like coffee or soup)



For more information, scan the code or visit: wspehsu.ucsf.edu/prescriptions-for-prevention

Developed in partnership with the Environmental Research and Translation for Health (EaRTH) Center: <https://earth.ucsf.edu/>