Cleaning a Cistern

- A cistern needs to be cleaned and disinfected before you use it.

- Clean out all dirt resulting from building the cistern.

- Scrub the inside with 1/4 cup of 5% chlorine bleach mixed in 10 gallons of water.
  
  CAUTION: Make sure air can get in and out of the cistern so the workers inside are not overcome by the bleach fumes.

- Hose down the inside until you no longer smell bleach and then drain the cistern.

- Repeat this cleaning at least every five years. Clean the cistern more often if you heat with wood or coal, or if you have a lot of leaves on the roof.

- Clean gutters, downspouts, the roof washer and sand filter often.
Disinfecting a Cistern

If bacteria is found in your cistern water you have two choices:

1. Chlorine pump treatment
   - Inserts chlorine into the water as the water enters the house.
   - It takes 5 minutes of contact time to kill the bacteria. A long pipe or storage tank is needed between the point where the chlorine goes into the water and the point where the water is used.
   - Chlorine may leave a taste in your water.

2. Batch treatment
   - Add 1 oz. of 5% chlorine bleach for every 200 gallons of water in the cistern.
   - Treat once a week.
   - Thoroughly mix bleach into the water.
   - Not as good as chlorine pump because new water coming in may be contaminated by sediment at the bottom of the tank. This sediment may have high bacteria levels.
   - Chlorine may cause a taste that will go away in time.

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