

TOTAL COLIFORM (BACTERIA) TESTING

SAMPLING PROTOCOL - The “Total Coliform Sampling Container” is sealed, sterile, and containing sodium thiosulfate. While sampling drinking water, use caution during collection (contamination can occur if the bottle opening is touched by the spigot, faucet, or your hands). Do not rinse or overflow this container with the sample (the sodium thiosulfate must remain inside). However, you should thoroughly flush your drinking water system before collection of a sample (making sure that you are not collecting water that has stood in the lines). Fill the container with COLD water to the “fill line” identified on of sample container (This is a 100 mL sample volume). The Total Coliform analysis has a 30-hour holding time before the analysis must commence. The Laboratory processes this test at 1:00 PM each workday. Plan to collect your sample and bring it to the laboratory with minimal time spent on the holding time. Samples received Thursday afternoon and Friday are surcharged due the analysis completion occurring on the weekend. Samples should be kept cold if there is a delay in bringing them to the laboratory.

EXPLANATION OF RESULTS – A report is generated 5 working days from the submission of the sample. A result of “Absent” indicates the NO Total Coliform (bacteria) or Fecal Coliform (bacteria) was detected in your drinking water according to Federal and State bacteriological guidelines for drinking water quality. A result of “Present” indicates that Total Coliform, or Fecal Coliform, or BOTH are detected in your drinking water.

CHLORINATION PROCEDURE – Elimination of Total Coliform (bacteria) and Fecal Coliform (bacteria) can be accomplished through chlorinating your drinking water well. Household chlorine bleach (e.g. Clorox) may be used to chlorinate your well. The following steps should be taken when chlorinating your water system:

1. Pour chlorine bleach directly into well (suggested amount is 1 gallon per 100 feet well depth).
2. Turn-on kitchen cold water tap on until chlorine odor is detected. Turn-off kitchen tap. Repeat this step with every cold water tap in the house (one at a time), including outside spigots.
3. Allow chlorine to stand in water lines undisturbed for at least 8 hours.
4. After the minimum 8-hour period expires, flush out water system by turning all cold water taps on at the same time. Let the water flush the lines until the chlorine odor is undetectable. (HINT: it is sometimes easier to smell small amounts of chlorine by collecting water in a glass and taking it outside to smell)

PLEASE NOTE: Flushing the system can take an hour or more. This time period is dependent on the well depth and length of water lines. It is IMPORTANT that the water be chlorine-free before you collect a sample for analysis.