



Total Coliform Sampling Guide



Chain of Custody

Must contain sampling date, time sampled, and sample source. This is needed to determine whether samples are within hold times and valid for analysis. If looking for Total coliforms please inform us if you would like Presence/Absence (Colilert) or Enumeration (MPN-Most Probable Number or MFT-Membrane filtration technique).

Sample Collection

All water samples must be taken in approved, sterile sampling containers, which our laboratory can provide upon request. Treated (municipality/distribution systems) water samples must be de-chlorinated with sodium thio-sulfate (this is already in bottles that are provided by our laboratory). Keep sampling bottle closed until it is to be filled at the sampling location.

Distribution or sink tap sample

1. Remove aerator from faucet.
2. Rinse faucet with a bleach solution.
3. Flush line- by turning tap fully on and letting it run for 2 to 3 minutes, or for a time sufficient to permit clearing the service line.
4. Reduce water flow to permit filling bottle without splashing.
5. 100mL is needed for each sample submitted for analysis.

Well samples

If a sample is taken from a well fitted with a hand pump, pump water to waste for about 5 minutes before collecting sample. If the well is equipped with a mechanical pump, collect sample from a tap on the discharge. If there is no pumping machinery, collect sample directly from the well by means of a sterilized bottle fitted with a weight at the base; take care to avoid contaminating sample by any surface scum.

Hold Times

Hold times for regulatory samples are 30 hours for the Presence/Absence test method and 8 hours for membrane filtration method. Non-regulatory samples are hours regardless of test method.

If client is aware that hold times are going to be exceeded but would like analysis to proceed anyway, please indicate this on the Chain of Custody.

If hold times are exceeded results are invalid and this will be noted on the final report.

Turn Around Times

Total coliform-Presence/Absence (Colilert) or enumeration (MPN) results can be reported in 24 hours. Total coliform enumeration (MFT) results will take 6-10 days.

Sample Shipping

All samples must be shipped cold, not frozen and should remain up right. The best way to ship method of shipment for these samples is to use ice packs, not soda bottles filled with frozen water, bags of ice or just loose ice. Samples that are not shipped properly could end up getting contaminated or rejected.