

Collecting a Water Sample for Drinking Water Coliform Bacteria Testing

Note: Bacterial samples are not accepted on Fridays

Directions for homeowners

1. Take sample from spigot or faucet closest to the well, if possible, and before the treatment system (such as a water softener or RO filter). **Do not** take the sample from a goose neck or swing-type faucet, or a faucet that leaks. If you have this type of faucet inside, then collect your sample from an outside spigot instead. Be sure to remove the aerator screen.
2. Run cold water for at least 3-5 minutes.
3. Turn faucet or spigot off, then disinfect the faucet with alcohol, bleach, or a flame.
4. Run water for additional 3 minutes or so, making sure that the water runs clear.
5. Open sample bottle, taking care not to touch the inside of the bottle or bottle cap with your fingers (this is a sterile container). Take the sample midstream and collect water up to 100 mL line. Be sure that the water level is at least up to the 100 mL line on the bottle. Do not overfill. Cap bottle immediately.
6. Make sure to write on the Chain of Custody form the date and time of collection, who took the sample and fill out contact information.
7. Place bottle on ice. Take sample to the lab within 8 hours of sample collection.

It is advisable to keep records of water test results for future reference. Records may reflect trends in water quality or may be used to support damage claims from outside contamination, such as from chemical spills or leaks.*

*References: Michigan State University Extension website:

http://www.msue.msu.edu/objects/content_revision/download.cfm/revision_id.498910/workspace_id.-4/01500568.html/

Montana State University Extension Water Quality Program:

http://waterquality.montana.edu/docs/homeowners/sampling_instructions.shtml