

Private Drinking Water Sampling

Taking a Water Sample:

Follow these steps carefully so that the sterile water sample bottle obtained from the laboratory does not become contaminated, and sample water only intended for drinking water (i.e. do not sample from untreated lake water). Plan to sample your water when you are sure you can deliver it to a health unit office or the public health laboratory within 24 HOURS. Your water sample must be kept cool – do not store or transport in warm places such as a trunk.

1. **Remove any aerator, screen, or other attachment from your kitchen faucet.** If you cannot do this, take a sample from an inside tap with no aerator, such as the bathtub. Do not take a sample from an outside faucet or the garden hose.
2. **Run the cold tap** for 2 – 3 minutes.
3. **Swab the end of the faucet spout** with isopropyl alcohol or diluted bleach solution (1 part household bleach to 10 parts water) to remove debris or bacteria. Do not disinfect the spout with a flame because this can damage the faucet.
4. **Turn on the cold water again.** Let it run for two to three minutes before collecting sample.
5. **Remove the lid of the sample bottle.** Do not touch the inside of the lid, put the lid down, or touch it with anything other than the water being collected. Do not rinse out the bottle.
6. **Fill the bottle to the level that is marked** (see instructions in kit). Close the lid firmly and refrigerate.

Results are unreliable if the sample is improperly collected, stored or transported.

What is tested?

The Public Health Laboratory tests for indicator bacteria called total coliform and E.coli. The samples are not tested for other contaminants such as chemicals.

Total Coliform: These bacteria are often found in animal waste and sewage, and soil and vegetation. If they are in your drinking water, it means surface water may be entering your well.

E. coli (Escherichia coli). These bacteria are normally found only in the digestive systems of people and animals. If they are in your drinking water, it usually means that animal or human waste is entering your well from a nearby source

If lab results show contamination see the back of this sheet for a chart explaining possible results, what they mean and what to do.

For More Information:

For more information on interpreting your sample results, or for information on how to sample for other contaminants such as chemicals, call 705-721-7520 (1-877-721-7520) to speak with a public health inspector or visit our website www.simcoemuskokahealth.org

Other resources available:

- [Taking Care of Your Well](#)
- [Well Disinfection](#)
- [Treatment Devices](#)

Results • What do they Mean • What to Do

1. If your results indicate you should stop using tap water, consider using bottled water or municipal supply.
2. If you wish to continue to use your tap water, first bring it to a rolling boil for at least one minute.
3. Let it cool before using it for drinking, making baby breastmilk substitutes (infant formula), juices, ice or recipes, brushing your teeth, rinsing contact lenses, and washing food or dishes.
4. Refrigerate your boiled water until it is used.

RESULTS INDICATE:

NO SIGNIFICANT EVIDENCE OF BACTERIAL CONTAMINATION

Total coliform – 5 or less

E. coli – 0

- No significant bacterial contamination was found.
 - Continue to test your drinking water on a regular basis to see if there are any changes in your drinking water quality (three times/year).

SIGNIFICANT EVIDENCE OF BACTERIAL CONTAMINATION

Total coliform – More than 5

E. coli – 0

- Significant bacterial contamination was found.
 - Stop using your tap water.
 - Check treatment, shock well and follow [well disinfection procedure](#)
 - Resample your water.

UNSAFE TO DRINK Evidence of faecal contamination

E. coli - 1 or more

- Indicates bacterial contamination from animal or human faeces.
- Your water is **UNSAFE TO DRINK**.
 - Stop using your tap water.
 - If you have a treatment device check it for problems. Maintenance may be needed.
 - Resample your water.

NDOGN - No Data: Overgrown with Non-target

- Heavily contaminated with bacteria often found in the environment.
- Your drinking water MAY be unsafe to drink.
 - Stop using your tap water.
 - Resample you water.

NDOGT - No Data: Overgrown with Target

- Heavily contaminated with bacteria often found in the environment and the indicators of bacterial contamination, total coliforms and / or E. coli are present.
- Your drinking water is **UNSAFE** to drink.
 - Stop using your tap water.
 - If you have a treatment device check it for problems. Maintenance may be needed.
 - Resample your water.

For more information on your water sample results, call 705-721-7520 (1-877-721-7520) to speak with a public health inspector.