HOW TO COLLECT A WATER SAMPLE
Instructions for Mason County Residents

Background

"Coliform Bacteria" is a general term used to describe a group of bacteria whose presence indicates contamination of a water system. Certain types of coliform, such as E. coli, are capable of causing illness in humans. Thurston County recommends that private well owners test their water at least once a year for coliform bacteria and once every three years for nitrates.

When and Where to Pickup Sampling Bottles and Submit a Sample for Testing

$27.00 per sample (Please enclose check made out to TCEH with sample.)

Sample bottle pick up and drop off is located at:

415 N. 6th Street (in downtown Shelton)

- Pick up sample bottles Monday through Friday from 8 am to 4:30 pm
- Drop samples off Monday and Tuesday from 8 am to 4:30 pm
- You must collect and submit samples to the Mason County Health Department on the same day or else they will exceed allowable holding times prior to being tested by the lab.

****Please note that bacteriological samples are accepted at the Thurston County Courthouse Monday- Wednesday 8:00am to 5:00pm and on Thursdays from 8:00am to 12:30pm. Nitrate samples are accepted Monday and Tuesday 8:00am - 5:00pm.****

Fill out the lab form completely down to the "DRINKING WATER RESULTS" section, **pressing firmly** with a black pen. Be sure the form is filled out **COMPLETELY** including the **CORRECT DATE AND TIME OF COLLECTION**.

- **For a private well** sample, under "Type of Water System" check other and write single family well.
- **For a well that serves two homes**, under "Type of Water System", check "Other" and write two-party; under "Type of Sample" (box #1 lower portion of form) check "Routine Distribution Sample".
- **For a Public Water System** (connection of three or more homes), under "Group A and Group B Systems", provide the system ID# and name of the community water system (if you don't know the number, call the Environmental Health Department); under "Type of Sample", check #1 "Routine Distribution Sample".

Keep Sample Bottle Sterile

Your sample bottle has been sterilized. For accurate testing, it is important to keep if free from contamination. If you accidentally contaminate it, please return it for another sterile bottle. Do not boil the bottle or put anything inside it except your sample.

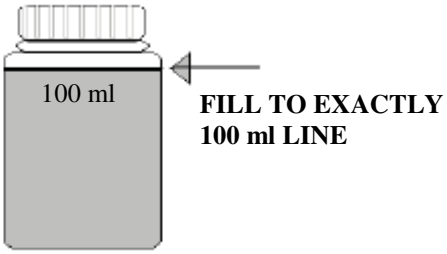
- You may see moisture or white powder in the bottle—it is supposed to be there.
- Do not put tape, or in any way mark or write, on the bottle.

DO NOT Heat Your Sample

Keep your water sample out of the sunlight and heat, especially when transporting it in your car. If it will take more than an hour to deliver your sample for testing, we recommend transporting it in a cooler with ice. A warm sample can change your sample results.

Sample Collection

1. Select a faucet (preferably a non-swivel type) in the bathroom or kitchen.
2. Remove any filters or screens from the faucet tap.
3. Turn on the cold water and let it run for at least five minutes. Turn off the water.
4. Disinfect the tap by flaming around the orifice with a butane lighter or matches. Hold the flame back from the tap so that the flame won't discolor it. If you do not have a lighter or your tap is made from plastic or rubber, you may slowly pour boiling water over the tap to thoroughly heat it. This heating kills bacteria on the faucet that might accidentally contaminate your sample.
5. Turn the cold water back on for a few seconds to cool the tap. Adjust the water to produce an even flow. Remove the cap from the sample bottle and collect your sample as shown below:



DO NOT SET THE CAP DOWN OR TOUCH THE INSIDE OF THE CAP OR BOTTLE. FILL THE SAMPLE BOTTLE TO THE 100 ml LINE.

We cannot test the sample if the bottle is too full or not full enough. DO NOT let the faucet touch the bottle.

6. Re-cap the bottle and deliver to the lab as soon as possible.

Reporting of Results

You should receive test results by mail within a few days of when you submit your sample. If your sample shows contamination, we will call you with the results immediately and mail well disinfecting instructions with your report. Those instructions are available on our website at **www.co.thurston.wa.us/health/ehdw**.

Please Note

This test is for Coliform bacteria only (including E. coli). Thurston County also provides nitrate testing, which is recommended once every three years. If you want your water tested for minerals or other chemicals, a list of state-certified laboratories is available from Thurston County Environmental Health and the Washington State Department of Health.

For more information call: Thurston County Public Health & Social Services
Environmental Health Division, 360-867-2633
TDD Line for hearing impaired, 360-867-2603
www.co.thurston.wa.us/health/ehdw

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