



# HOW TO COLLECT A WATER SAMPLE



## 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

### **PICK UP EMPTY BOTTLES FOR TESTING AT:**

- 3000 Pacific Ave SE, Olympia 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor at Environmental Health • (360) 867-2673  
Mon-Fri 8am-4pm  
Prepay at this location with cash, check, credit card (MC, VISA) for **\$30.00**.

- Public Health Building, 412 Lilly Rd NE, Olympia • (360 )867-2500  
Mon-Fri 9am-4pm

### **DROP OFF BOTTLES FOR TESTING AT:**

- Thurston County Courthouse Building 1, 2000 Lakeridge Dr. SW, Olympia at the courtyard entrance off breeze way. The drop box is located on the bench to left of the door • (360) 867-2631  
Mon-Wed 8-5 and Thurs 8-12:30

- 3000 Pacific Ave SE, Olympia 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor at Environmental Health • (360) 867-2673 • Mon-Wed 8-1

- Public Health Building, 412 Lilly Rd NE, Olympia • (360 )867-2500 • Mon-Wed 9-1

**If not prepaid, attach a check for \$30.00**

**Please note: On Fridays, no water samples are accepted.**

*When returning samples to the locations below, the water sample must be collected Tuesday morning and dropped off no later than noon on Tuesday. Because these sites do not collect fees, when you return the sample, attach a check for \$30, payable to TCEH.*

- **Rainier Town Hall**, 102 Rochester St W  
446-2636  
PICK-UP: Monday–Thursday, 8 am–5 pm  
DROP-OFF: Tuesdays only, 8 am–noon

- **Tenino City Hall**, 149 S. Hodgden  
360-264-2368  
PICK-UP: Tuesday–Friday, 8 am–4 pm  
DROP-OFF: Tuesdays only, 8 am–noon

- **Rochester (R.O.O.F.)**, 10140 Highway 12360-  
360-273-6375  
PICK-UP: Mon–Fri, 9:30 am–5:30 pm  
DROP-OFF: Tuesdays only, 9:30 am–noon

- **Yelm Public Works**, 901 Rhoton Rd. SE  
360-458-3244  
PICK-UP: Monday–Friday, 8 am–5 pm  
DROP-OFF: Tuesdays only, 8 am–noon

**DELIVER YOUR SAMPLE FOR TESTING ON THE SAME DAY THAT YOU COLLECT IT.**

**Nitrate Samples Only Accepted on Monday and Tuesday**

## Complete Lab Form

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 Sample”, mark #4 “Sample Collected for Information Only”.
- **For a well that serves two homes**, under “Type of Water System”, check “Other” and write two- party; under “Type of Sample”, check #1 “Routine Distribution Sample”.
- **For a Public Water System** (3 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 Dept); 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 it 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

- Select a faucet in the kitchen, utility room or bathroom (avoid single handle faucet that mixes hot and cold or a spray type faucet). Non frost-free outdoor faucets are also acceptable.
- Remove any filters or screens from the faucet tap.
- Turn on the cold water and let it run for at least five minutes. Turn off the water.
- Disinfect the tap by scrubbing the exposed tap with a small brush dipped in a mild bleach solution. Use a standard bleach, one without fragrance or dye with a sodium hypochlorite concentration of 5.25% or greater, mixing approximately 1/8<sup>th</sup> teaspoon per 1 cup of water.
- Turn the cold water back on to an even low flow, remove the cap from the sample bottle and collect your sample as described 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.**

- 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](http://www.co.thurston.wa.us/health/ehdw).

## Collecting Other Samples — Lakes, rivers, reservoirs, swimming pools

Select a spot where a representative sample can be taken. Remove the cap from the sample bottle and collect the sample by submerging the bottle completely in the water. Do this in a continuous sweeping motion, extending the mouth of the bottle into the water and sweeping to a depth of approximately 1 1/2 feet. Continue the sweep to the water surface and above. Carefully pour off the water above the shoulder of the bottle, and then replace the cap without touching the mouth of the bottle. Submit **non-drinking water samples** Monday through Thursday to our location at the Thurston County Courthouse.

## 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, 360-867-2673  
TDD Line for hearing impaired, 1-800-658-6384  
[www.co.thurston.wa.us/health/ehdw](http://www.co.thurston.wa.us/health/ehdw)