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