



# 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

- **County Courthouse Bldg 1**, 2000 Lakeridge Dr SW  
2nd floor, Olympia • 360-867-2631  
PICK-UP: Monday–Friday, 8 am–5 pm  
DROP-OFF: Monday–Thursday, 8 am–5 pm and  
Friday, 8 am–noon  
(When you pickup a sampling bottle at the Court-  
house, \$25 will be collected in advance. Payment  
can be in cash, check, or credit card – VISA or MC.  
There is no prepayment on bottles picked up after  
12 pm, however when returning a sample, please  
enclose a check for \$25, made out to Thurston County,  
and attach to the water sample.)
- **Public Health Bldg.**, 412 Lilly Rd N,  
Olympia • 360-867-2500  
PICK-UP: Monday–Friday, 8 am–5 pm  
DROP-OFF: Monday–Thursday, 8 am–1 pm  
(When you return the sample, please  
enclose a check for \$25, made out to  
Thurston County, and attach to water  
Sample.)

*When returning samples to the locations below, water sample must be collected Tuesday morning and dropped off no later than noon each Tuesday. Because these sites do not collect fees, when you return the sample, enclose a check for \$25, made out to Thurston County, and attach to water sample.*

- **Rainier Town Hall**, 102 Rochester St W  
360-446-2636  
PICK-UP: Monday–Thursday, 8 am–5 pm  
DROP-OFF: Tuesdays only, 8 am–noon
- **Tenino City Hall**, 149 S. Hodgen  
360-264-2368  
PICK-UP: Monday–Thursday, 8 am–5 pm  
DROP-OFF: Tuesdays only, 8 am–noon
- **Rochester (R.O.O.F.)**, 10140 Highway 12  
360-273-6375  
PICK-UP: Monday–Friday, 9 am–5:30 pm  
DROP-OFF: Tuesdays only, 8 am–noon
- **Yelm City Hall**, 105 Yelm Ave W  
360-458-8402  
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.

## 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 community 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

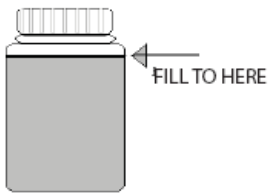
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Keep your water sample out of the sunlight and heat, especially when transporting it in your car. If it will take more than an hour to deliver your sample for testing, we recommend transporting it in a cooler with ice. A warm sample can change your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

## Sample Collection

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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 SHOULDER ONLY.**

We cannot test the sample if the bottle is too full. 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

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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

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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

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*This test is for Coliform bacteria only (including E. Coli and/or Fecal Coliform). 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, 360-867-2603  
[www.co.thurston.wa.us/health/ehdw](http://www.co.thurston.wa.us/health/ehdw)