



# BRAZOS COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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www.brazoshealth.org

## Information on Testing Drinking Water Samples for Coliform Bacteria and *E. coli*

Cost: \$20 per sample

- We accept cash, local checks only, and credit/debit cards (with an additional convenience fee)
- We will fax water testing results upon request for an additional fee of \$3 for local faxes and \$5 for long distance faxes.

Drop Off Times: We accept water samples Monday – Thursday (8am-3pm).

Please note the following:

- No samples will be accepted after 3pm.
- No samples will be accepted on Friday.
- Hours are subject to change due to county observed holidays.

### Instructions for Collecting Samples:

1. Select a faucet for sampling which is free of contaminating devices (such as an aerator or garden hose) and in an area free of excessive dust, rain, or other sources of contamination.
2. Disinfect the faucet to prevent exterior contamination of the water sample and wait for it to air dry.
3. Turn on the faucet full force for two to three minutes to flush out anything which might be in the immediate pipes or the faucet itself, then turn the flow down to a small stream.
4. Carefully remove the cap, making sure that nothing touches the inside of the cap or the bottle. Without creating a splash, **fill the bottle to the 100 ml mark** and re-cap immediately.
  - Note: The bottle may be filled a little over the 100 ml mark, but it cannot be less than the 100 ml mark. Do not overfill past the shoulder of the bottle; there must be an air space at the top of the bottle. **Any sample turned in that does not meet these requirements will be marked unsuitable and rejected.**
  - Note: **Do not rinse the bottle out.** Each bottle contains sodium thiosulfate, a white powder used to neutralize chlorine. It is important that this powder remain in the bottle in order to get an accurate result.
5. Make sure each bottle is correctly identified and fill out a water requisition test form.
6. In order to be compliant by the National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Program (NELAP), **water samples must be delivered to the lab on ice or ice packs.**
7. Samples must be analyzed within 30 hours from the time of collection, so samples should be brought to the lab within 24 hours of collection to allow plenty of time to get the samples set-up within the 30 hour holding time. All samples are tested the same day they are submitted.

### Results:

Test results are typically ready by 3:30pm the following day the sample is received. If a sample is positive for bacteria, then the lab will notify the sample submitter as soon as possible via a phone call. Test results are mailed or faxed (for an additional fee).

### Interpretation of the Results:

- **Coliform Organisms Not Found:** As far as levels of harmful bacteria are concerned, your water is considered safe to drink at the time of sampling.
- **Coliform Organisms Found:** Coliform organisms are present in your water, and it might not be safe to drink. Here is what to do:
  - Don't touch the water. Don't use it for drinking, bathing, cooking, preparing food, making ice, washing dishes, or cleaning.
  - Instead, boil or disinfect your water before you use it, use bottled water, or get water from another source.
  - If you choose to boil your water, heat it to the boiling point and let it continue at a full boil for two minutes. Let it cool before using it for drinking or bathing.
  - Disinfect the well and repeat the test.
  - Until you get a test result of "Coliform Organisms Not Found" from the lab, continue to boil your water, use bottled water, or use water from another source.
  - If repeated tests continue to show coliform organisms are present, consider adding continuous disinfection equipment to your well.

\*This information is provided from TCEQ. Please see the TCEQ website for more information:  
[www.tceq.texas.gov](http://www.tceq.texas.gov)

**For more information, call the Brazos County Health Department Lab at  
(979) 361-5738.**