


# TAKING A TOTAL COLIFORM BACTERIA TEST PROPERLY

Many of the water samples which fail a total coliform bacteria test fail because of sampling error, not because the water is actually contaminated. To ensure that this does not happen to you, follow these steps when taking a sample from your water system:

**STEP 1**



**DO NOT RINSE OUT BOTTLE**  
The liquid in the bottle is meant to be there and will not contaminate your sample.

**STEP 5**



**TURN THE WATER DOWN** so it does not splash. Then fill the bottle only to the shoulder.

**STEP 2**




**REMOVE FAUCET SCREEN** or other hoses or aerators from the end of the faucet.

**STEP 6**



**SCREW ON CAP TIGHTLY** and take special care not to touch the inside of the cap or bottle.

**STEP 3**




**DISINFECT THE FAUCET** by dipping the end in a cap full of bleach before running the water. This is optional but is a good idea.

**STEP 7**




**FILL OUT PAPERWORK** and mail it to the lab with the filled bottle. Keep a copy of the paperwork. See back for an example of a completed sheet.

**STEP 4**



**RUN COLD WATER FOR AT LEAST 5 MINUTES** to ensure that the water you are sampling has not been sitting in the pipes or tanks for a long time.

Any Questions or Comments?  
Contact the Maine Drinking Water Program:  
(207) 287-2070



**Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention**  
An Office of the  
Department of Health and Human Services

Paul R. LePage, Governor      Mary C. Mayhew, Commissioner

# INSTRUCTIONS FOR COLLECTING COMPLIANCE WATER SAMPLES FOR TOTAL COLIFORM BACTERIA

1. Collect sample at the location you indicated on your bacteria sampling site plan.
2. Do not rinse out the bottle. The droplets of liquid or white powder inside are meant to be there. Keep cap on bottle until you collect the sample.
3. Remove any screens, hoses, or aerators from end of faucet.
4. Disinfect the faucet by dipping the end in a capful of bleach before turning on water. {This is optional, but a good idea.}
5. Run COLD water for at least 5 minutes to make sure it has not been sitting for a long time in pipes or tanks.
6. Turn water down so it does not splash. Run water at this rate for one minute.
7. Remove any seal, if present, from the bottle. Uncap the bottle and fill with water only to the 120 ml line. If there is no line, then fill only to the bottle's shoulder so to leave an air space. Be careful not to touch the inside of cap or bottle. NOTE: If you drop the cap in the sink or on the floor, do not submit the sample using this kit. Request a replacement kit from the lab.
8. Screw cap on tightly.
9. Fill out the required information on sample form. **SIGN THE FORM!** The sample will not be processed unless the form has a signature!
10. Return bottle with completed paperwork to lab. **SAMPLE MUST ARRIVE AT LAB WITHIN 30 HOURS OF COLLECTION!**

**IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS...PLEASE CALL THE MAINE DRINKING WATER PROGRAM AT (207) 287-2070 OR YOUR LABORATORY.**