

York Region Community and Health Services is mandated to promote safe water practices. This fact sheet is part of a series to provide information and standards on this topic.

Private Well Water Sampling Procedure

Homeowners on private wells are responsible for testing their own water supply. Private wells should be tested for bacterial contamination two or three times per year. The best time to sample your well water is when the probability of contamination is greatest. This is likely to be in early spring just after the thaw, after an extended dry spell, following heavy rains or if the well has not been in use for long periods of time, as in the case of seasonal residences.

Water from a source that has not been tested for bacteriological quality should *not* be used for drinking or food preparation, *making infant formula and juices*, cooking, making ice, washing fruits or vegetables, or brushing teeth. For these purposes, boiled water, bottled water or chlorinated water should be used. See *Safe Water Fact Sheet #2 - Emergency Water Treatment*.

Water sampling procedure

1. Water sample bottles can be obtained from the location(s) listed on page 2: Water Sample Bottle Pick-Up Locations. Unused water sample bottles can be kept as long as they have not been opened.
2. **Do not** open the sample bottle until you are ready to take the sample. **Do not** remove the white powder or rinse the bottle.
3. Disconnect or by-pass all water treatment devices e.g. water softeners and carbon filters. Consult the manufacturer's instructions for the correct procedure.
4. If possible, remove the aerator and washer from the end of the tap. Clean the end of the tap and threads with either a bleach and water solution (1 part bleach to 10 parts water) or rubbing alcohol swab. If you are unable to remove the aerator from the end of the tap, submerge the end of the tap with a container filled with a bleach and water solution.
5. Run the COLD WATER tap for three to five minutes.
6. Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water before you collect the water sample.
7. Unscrew the cap from the water sample bottle. Be sure not to contaminate the inside of the cap or the neck of the sample bottle by touching these areas or placing the cap on the counter. If you accidentally touch the inside of the lid or the neck of the bottle it must be discarded and a new sample collected.

8. Fill the bottle to the 200ml waterline and replace the cap. Remember to re-install the aerator and washer on the tap and check for proper operation. **Clean and disinfect the aerator prior to reattaching it to the tap.**

9. Complete the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care Laboratory Services "*Bacteriological Analysis of Drinking Water for Private Citizen, SINGLE HOUSEHOLD ONLY*" form. Include your telephone number with area code. **Water will not be tested if this form is not completely and accurately filled in.**

10. **Water samples must be kept cold.** Keep the filled bottle refrigerated until you are ready to bring it to the appropriate drop-off location. When ready, place the filled bottle in an insulated cooler with ice packs and transport to the nearest location listed below.

Please Note: Results are unreliable if sample was improperly collected or stored, or took more than 48 hours to reach the laboratory. If the water sample takes more than 48 hours to reach the laboratory, it will not be tested.

Water sample bottle pick-up and drop-off locations

Health Services Offices:	
Markham:	4261 Highway No. 7 East, Suite B6-9, Unionville,
Richmond Hill:	50 High Tech Road, 2 nd Floor, Richmond Hill
Newmarket:	The Tannery, 465 Davis Drive, Suite 240, Newmarket
Town of Georgina	
Georgina:	Georgina Civic Centre, 26557 Civic Centre Road, Keswick
Township of King (PICK UP ONLY)	
King City:	King Township Offices, 2075 King Road, King City
Nobleton:	Dr. W. Lacey Nobleton Arena, 15 Old King Road, Nobleton

A Public Health Inspector is available to answer questions Monday to Friday 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. toll-free at 1-800-361-5653 or TTY 1-866-252-9933.

Information Sources: Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (Public Health Laboratory Branch), Health Canada

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