



ANNOUNCING: LOW COST DRINKING WATER TESTING!

The CDC recommends that homeowners who obtain their drinking water from their own well, hauled water storage tank, cistern, pond or spring test the water for bacteria annually. When drinking water is tested for bacteria, it is tested for coliform group of bacterial organisms.

What is coliform?

Total coliform bacteria are a collection of relatively harmless microorganisms that live in large numbers in soils, plants and in the intestines of warm-blooded (humans) and cold-blooded animals. Coliforms aid in the digestion of food.

Where do you find coliform?

There are 16 species of total coliform found in soils, plants and in animal waste. A subgroup of coliform, called fecal coliform bacteria, is different from the total coliform group because they can grow at higher temperatures and are found only in the fecal waste of warm-blooded animals, including humans. There are six species of fecal coliform bacteria found in animal and human waste. *E. coli* is one type of the six species of fecal coliform bacteria. A **rare** strain of *E. coli* that you may have seen in the news can cause potentially dangerous outbreaks and illness. This strain is called *E. coli* 0157.

How do you come in contact with coliform?

You can come in contact with these bacteria by eating or drinking (ingesting) soils on plants and in water sources such as ponds, lakes and rivers. Fecal coliform bacteria can be found in water contaminated by domestic sewage or other sources of human and animal waste. As they are so common in the environment, coliform can enter your water system when the system is not properly protected or when alteration work is done on the water system.

Can coliform harm your health?

Finding coliform or other bacteria in water does not necessarily always mean you will become ill. However, if these organisms are present, other disease-causing organisms may also be present. The presence of fecal contamination is a sign that a possible health risk exists for individuals exposed to this water. Health symptoms related to drinking or swallowing water contaminated with fecal coliform bacteria generally range from no ill effects to cramps and diarrhea (gastrointestinal distress). Sanitarians and those who test water look for total and fecal coliform

bacteria to alert people to the possible dangers and suggest proper treatments to remove potentially harmful bacteria from the water. The presence of any fecal coliform in drinking water is of immediate concern as many diseases can be spread through fecal transmission.

How can you reduce coliform contamination?

Groundwater (underground drinking water) in a properly constructed well should have minimal-to-no coliform bacteria. If coliform are found in a well it generally means bacterial and mineral slimes have built up and your well needs to be professionally cleaned by a registered private water system contractor.

Homeowners who use cisterns, springs or ponds as a drinking water source should use treatment devices to disinfect and filter the water to remove coliform bacteria. The presence of total coliform in a water sample means the disinfection system is not working properly.

Improperly maintained treatment devices can be sources of contamination. Home water filters and other water-treatment devices should be changed and maintained in accordance with manufacturer's recommendations.

How can I test my water for coliform?

Summit County Public Health (SCPH) is offering low cost analysis of water collected by residents. You can sample your own water for coliform bacteria with a test kit that you can obtain from SCPH. The kit includes instructions on collecting the water, a sterile sample bottle and guidance for returning the sample to SCPH. Sample kits may be picked up at our office address below and are available at many township, village and city offices.

Please read the water sampling instructions carefully as the samples must arrive at our laboratory within 24 hours of collection and must be kept cool but not frozen.

SCPH charges \$10.00 for the sample analysis of a sample collected from the occupant of the home. Contact us for pricing if you are a consultant or contractor.

SCPH's lab will accept water samples Monday-Thursday from 8:00 am through 5:00 pm. All samples must be delivered to the Environmental Health front desk located at 1867 W. Market Street, Entrance C, in Akron.

**For further information, contact our
Environmental Health office at 330-926-5600
weekdays between 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m.**

www.scphoh.org

**Summit County Public Health
1867 W. Market Street, Akron OH 44313**