



Public Health

Idaho North Central District

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Sampling for Bacteria in Private Drinking Water

Bottle to Use



Sterile plastic bottles must be used.

Sampling Instructions

Wear gloves when collecting samples. Do not rinse or overfill the bottle. The bottles are sterile so care must be taken not to contaminate the bottle or cap. Once the distribution line is flushed for 5 to 6 minutes and the flow reduced, quickly open the bottle (but do not set the cap down), hold the cap by its outside edges only, and fill the sample bottle to just above the 100 mL line leaving a one inch headspace. Cap the bottle immediately and place it into a cooler with ice for delivery or overnight shipment to the laboratory. Always collect cold water, never sample hot water.

Selecting Sample Taps

Each faucet should be examined carefully to ensure its suitability. AVOID these sampling sites if possible:

- Swivel-type faucets because they are difficult to disinfect;
- Faucets connected to cisterns, softeners, pumps, pressure tanks or hot water heaters;
- New plumbing and fixtures or those repaired recently;
- Faucets with a single valve for hot and cold water;
- Faucets or taps with leaky packing material around the stem;
- Faucets that supply areas, such as janitorial or commercial sinks, where bacterial contamination is likely;
- Faucets or taps close to or below ground level;
- Faucets that point upward;
- Faucets that have threads on the inside of their spouts because they are difficult to disinfect;
- Outdoor faucets; and
- Faucets with aerators because they may harbor bacteria. If such faucets are used, it is recommended that the aerator should be removed before a sample is collected and disinfected before replacing it.