

E-MAIL US !

WaterLab.info@houstontx.gov

City of Houston
Health Department Laboratory
Water & Dairy Section
2250 Holcombe Blvd.
Houston, TX 77030

CALL US !

832.393.3939

DRINKING WATER INFORMATION & TESTING

The City of Houston Water & Dairy Environmental Microbiology Lab accepts and tests samples of water intended for human consumption and use. Water is tested for the presence of Total Coliform bacteria and E. coli. The analysis takes 24 hours to complete.

Samples must be submitted in sterile treated bottles supplied by the City of Houston Health Department, Harris County Health Department, the Texas Department of State Health Services, Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ), or your local health authority.

- Water samples are accepted Monday – Friday from 8:00 am to 4:00 pm
- The fee for drinking water testing is \$16.50 per bottle
- Payment must be made when the sample is delivered to the laboratory. We accept checks, money orders, credit cards (Visa, MC, Discover), and City of Houston accounts.
- Samples will not be processed without payment or a City of Houston account in good standing.
- **No cash will be accepted – no exceptions**

[Click here for Laboratory and sample drop-off locations](#)

Sample Collection

- Select a cold water faucet, preferably an outside faucet that does not leak (avoid hoses, fire hydrants, dirty areas, and areas behind bushes). Do not take samples from kitchen or bathroom sinks. Avoid sampling on extremely windy days or when it is raining.
- Remove any screen or attachment to the faucet
- Clean the faucet head with isopropyl alcohol or bleach solution and/or flame with a handheld torch.
- Run the water 2 or 3 minutes to clear the line.
- Adjust the flow to a slow, steady stream.
- Remove the shrink band from the bottle (do not use the bottle if the shrink band is missing)
- Remove the lid of the bottle. **Do not touch the inside of the lid or the bottle. Do not rinse out the bottle.**
- Fill the bottle ABOVE the 100ml line to at least the shoulder of the bottle, leaving adequate space for mixing. **Do not overfill the bottle.**
- Underfilled and overfilled bottles will not be analyzed
- Replace the lid tightly
- Place the sample in a cooler with ice or ice packs and transport to the lab within 28 hours of collection.
- **Do not freeze the sample.** Frozen samples will not be analyzed.



Remove the shrink band before filling the bottle

Please fill to "shoulder" of bottle

100 ml line etched on bottle

UNDERFILLED AND OVERFILLED BOTTLES WILL BE REJECTED !!!

- DON'T TOUCH THE INSIDE OF THE LID or BOTTLE
- DON'T RINSE OUT THE BOTTLE
- KEEP THE SAMPLE COOL WITH ICE OR ICE PACKS AND TRANSPORT TO THE LAB WITHIN 28 HRS.

CONTACT US

PHONE 832.393.3939 E-MAIL WaterLab.Info@houstontx.gov

WWW.HOUSTONTX.GOV/HEALTH/WATER.HTML

Sample Form

- Fill out all information for each sample on the LEFT side of the bold center line on the form using BLACK ink.
- PUBLIC systems must include PWS ID number on all samples.
- PUBLIC systems must include Chlorine residual on all Routine and Repeat samples.
- PUBLIC systems may put up to 5 sample locations from the same system number on one form.
- The test result will be mailed to the name and address you write on the form. **Please write legibly** to ensure proper recording of all information.
- If you have questions about the form, please call 832.393.3939 for help completing it.

Sample Transport

- **Deliver the sample to the laboratory within 28 hours of collection**
- **Water samples should be held and transported to the lab on ice or ice packs.**
- Do not allow the sample form to get wet during transport of the sample.
- If you cannot deliver the sample on the day of collection, store it in the refrigerator overnight and transport it on ice **within 28 hours of collection.**

Sample Results

- We will attempt to contact you by phone using the number you wrote on the form IF
 - Your sample was unsatisfactory for any reason and we were not able to analyze it.
 - Coliform organisms were present in your sample.
- Verbal results are available 24 hours after you drop off your sample
- Reports are mailed to the address you write on the form.
- You should receive your report within 5 to 7 business days.
- If your report does not arrive within 2 weeks, please contact the laboratory at 832.393.3939.
- To locate a report, we must have
 - The date the sample was submitted AND
 - The name of the return addressee exactly the way it was written on the form.

What do your results mean?

- If Total Coliform and E. coli organisms are **ABSENT**
 - The water is bacteriologically safe to use at the time of sampling.
- If Total Coliform organisms are **PRESENT**
 - The water contains bacteria commonly found in run-off or surface water, which could include disease producing organisms.
- If E. coli organisms are **PRESENT**
 - The water contains bacteria that is commonly found in sewage (animal or human) which could include disease producing organisms.

- If Total Coliform or E. coli organisms are **PRESENT** The water is **NOT SAFE** to use for drinking, bathing, brushing teeth, washing hands, or washing any food you will eat raw.
- Disinfect the well (see next page) and submit another sample before using the water.

City of Houston

Department of Health and Human Services
Bureau of Laboratory Services
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Well Disinfection (standard chlorination procedure)

Well disinfection is necessary in the following circumstances:

1. When coliform "found" (total coliforms or E.coli) results are obtained from a water well sample.
2. When any work is done to the plumbing or well system.
3. When a well has been flooded.

Note: Check to make sure the well is pumping clear water before chlorinating. If the water is turbid, run it until it is clear before chlorinating.

1. Locate the wellhead and remove the access plug or bolt so that the area within the well casing is exposed.
2. Using a funnel, pour in an appropriate amount of liquid chlorine bleach (Clorox, Purex, etc.). 1/2 to 1 gallon of bleach per 100 feet of well depth is the recommended approximate dosage. Greater amounts are recommended for excessively cloudy water or for hand-dug wells.
3. Using the nearest faucet to the well and a garden hose, allow water to run through the funnel into the well for two or three hours. This will circulate the chlorinated well water and improve the germ-killing action by allowing all fittings and equipment in the well to be exposed to the chlorine solution.
4. After the well water has circulated for a while, the garden hose and funnel may be removed and the access plug replaced. The disinfection process should be extended throughout the entire plumbing system.
5. To disinfect the remainder of the plumbing system, turn on the next available faucet and allow it to run until the bleach odor can be detected, then turn it off. Repeat this step throughout the plumbing system at each faucet, including one (1) hot water faucet. Flush each toilet. Then, allow the chlorinated water to remain in the plumbing system over night or for 24 hours if possible. During this time, the water should not be used for drinking, bathing or cooking.
6. After disinfecting the well and plumbing system, flush all faucets until the bleach odor can no longer be detected and the water is clear of any debris or color. Flush outside faucets first - you do not want to flood the septic system.
7. Submit another bacteriological sample to determine if the disinfection process was successful.

Keep in mind that a single disinfection may not be sufficient because certain well systems, particularly shallow wells, hand-dug wells, and old wells are more vulnerable to contamination. Water from these types of systems should be checked by periodically submitting samples for bacteriological analysis. Continuous disinfection equipment should be considered for any water well with repeated samples positive for coliform organisms.

For further information, call the **TCEQ (Texas Commission on Environmental Quality)** at 512.239.4691 or Harris County Health Department Environmental Services at 713.274.6300. For inquiries about water supplied by the City of Houston, call Water Customer Service at 713.371.1400.