



COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

PUBLIC HEALTH BRANCH
PUBLIC HEALTH LABORATORY
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Which Water Test Do I Need?

The Public Health Laboratory offers water tests for total coliform and *E. coli* bacteria. Here is a list of the tests we offer and a brief definition of each.

Presence/Absence: \$23.00

This test is *only* used for drinking water samples. This type of test indicates whether coliforms or *E. coli* bacteria are in your water. This test will not give you a count of bacteria in your water. You will receive a report stating total coliform and *E. coli* present or absent.

Colilert 51: \$28.00

This test is mainly used for drinking water samples. This type of test indicates whether total coliform and *E. coli* bacteria are in your water and gives you an approximate count of those bacteria. You will receive a report stating total coliform and *E. coli* present or absent and the approximate number of those bacteria in your sample.

Colilert 2000: \$28.00

This test is used for spring/creek water, Long Term 2 Enhanced Surface Water Treatment Rule (LT2) started Oct. 2008, or any other type of surface water. Colilert 2000 also indicates the presence or absence of total coliform and *E. coli* bacteria, but has a higher endpoint than Colilert 51. A higher endpoint means that this test can count a higher number of bacteria than Colilert 51, if they are present. **This test is more suitable for types of water that typically have higher counts of bacteria.** You will receive a report stating total coliform and *E. coli* present or absent and the approximate number of those bacteria in your sample.

What are coliform bacteria?

Coliform bacteria are found in many natural settings, including plants and soil. One very common coliform bacteria, *E. coli*, is found in warm-blooded animals. It is used worldwide as a measure of disease potential in water. The test used here distinguishes between the different types of coliform bacteria present in the sample: soil and plants (total coliform) vs. *E. coli* from mammals.

What is surface water?

Surface water is any type of untreated water that is open to the environment such as spring, creek, or river water.

What is an endpoint?

An endpoint is the highest amount of bacteria that can be counted by that specific test. Some tests can count higher than others, i.e. drinking water does not need a count as high as wastewater does.

Remember, the US EPA considers the presence of any coliform as rendering the water unsuitable for drinking.