

# COLIFORM SAMPLING INSTRUCTIONS

## **Testing For Coliform**

Testing for coliform bacteria will reveal whether your water supply may be contaminated with infectious organisms, but will not provide a direct measure of pathogenic, or disease-causing, bacteria. Specific disease-producing organisms present in water are not easily identified, and testing for these organisms in the lab is complex and time consuming. Coliform bacteria, on the other hand, can be easily identified in the lab and are used as an indicator of the bacteriological quality of water.

Some members of the coliform indicator group occur naturally in the intestines of humans as well as other warm blooded animals and are discharged in great numbers in human and animal wastes. Others occur naturally in surface water of varying quality and in topsoil. A positive analysis for coliform bacteria indicates the well sample may be contaminated by surface water or fecal material. This may suggest that the water well may not be properly constructed to protect it from sources of bacteriological contamination. Negative results indicate there was no contamination at the time of sampling.

## **Collecting a Water Sample**

- ◆ Multiple bottles may be required depending upon the number of tests requested; please fill all of the bottles.
- ◆ Collect samples Monday, Tuesday, or Wednesday so lab tests can be completed during the same week.
- ◆ If using the post office take the samples only a short time before mailing.
- ◆ Wash hands before collecting a sample.
- ◆ Select a faucet **without** a threaded outlet, if possible. A bathtub faucet is often a good place to obtain your sample.
- ◆ Do not take a sample from a fire or yard hydrant.
- ◆ Allow water to flow smoothly from the pump to the faucet for at least five minutes.
- ◆ Carefully unscrew the cap of the sampling bottle. Be sure you **do not** touch the inside edges and threads of either the bottle or the cap.
- ◆ Do not rinse the bottle because a chemical preservative is intentionally added to some bottles.
- ◆ Do not lay the cap down while collecting a sample.
- ◆ For coliforms, samples must arrive at the lab within 30 hours of collection.