

Well Water Testing

Test Kit Steps and Interpretation

Well Testing

To promote healthy and safe wells, the Tennessee Department of Health encourages private well owners to test water for potential contaminants, including coliform bacteria.

Coliform Test Kits

Coliform test kits detect coliform bacteria, which indicate fecal contamination from human or animal waste. Coliform bacteria can cause gastrointestinal illness. No level of coliform bacteria is considered safe for drinking water.

Steps for Using the Coliform Test Kit

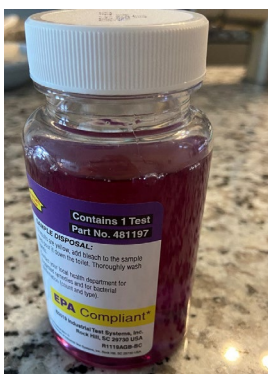
1. Fill the jar with water, following the instructions in the test kit.
2. Screw the lid back on, making sure it will not leak, and shake the jar for 20 seconds to mix the powdered growth media with the water.
3. **The liquid turns purple at the start of the test.** After 48 hours, if coliform bacteria are present, the color shifts to a yellow color. If the water is purple or pink, it means your water is negative for coliform bacteria.

Interpreting Your Results



Yellow – Positive Test

The test detected coliform bacteria. We recommend filtering and disinfecting the water before using for drinking. Add a filter with a pore size of 0.5 microns or less. Filters are usually available at home improvement or hardware stores. Disinfection could include chlorination or ultraviolet light. See instructions for Well Disinfection Using Laundry Bleach or work with a company that provides water treatment installation for private wells. Ultraviolet lights can be purchased from home improvement or hardware stores.



Pink / Purple – Negative Test

The test did not detect coliform bacteria. However, water quality can change, so we recommend testing well water annually or following events such as flooding or other disasters.

Questions? Contact: 615-532-7111 or Waterborne.Health@tn.gov

Note: The State of Tennessee does not regulate private well or spring water quality. These tests and recommendations are provided for informational purposes only. To learn more about protecting your private water supply, please visit: [Private Water Supply \(tn.gov\)](http://PrivateWaterSupply.tn.gov)