

SHIAWASSEE COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH DIVISION

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<http://health.shiawassee.net/ehdirect.html>

Public Alert – Water Samples

Don't Panic!!

Positive coliform bacteria samples from newly constructed wells are common. The drilling procedure is a dirty process; therefore many different factors can introduce bacteria into the system. The following are just a few:

- Debris can enter the well via the casing or bore hole during the drilling process
- The casing is dirty to start with, from storage outside to being dragged on the ground
- Drilling fluids contaminate the casing and harbor organisms
- New plumbing lines are not sterile

As you can see, many variables contribute to the introduction of “coliform” bacterial to the well. Yes, the bacteria don't belong in the well. Coliform bacteria does not normally grow in ground water. We have introduced it. However, there is a way to clean up the well and distribution system. This is called DISINFECTION. Chlorine (bleach) or chlorination is one method of disinfection. Chlorinating has proven most effective against a wide variety of organisms. It is also most cost effective. However, the chlorine can only kill the bacteria it comes in contact with. Therefore, it is very important that a thorough flushing of the system be accomplished prior to sampling or resampling. USE as much water as possible, but be careful DO NOT saturate your septic system, connect a hose to an exterior tap and thoroughly flush until all chlorine is gone. A clean sampling tap is also essential. If you personally are doing the sampling, make sure a steady stream of water without excess pressure is directed into the sampling container. Cap the bottle immediately and deliver to post office ASAP. If the sample is to sit around for a short period of time, it must be refrigerated.

In time, the well will clear up. Coliform bacteria are a group of indicator organisms that key us to the presence of possible contaminating elements. Your new well has been permitted, inspected, and meets the construction standards of the Act 368 P.A. 127.

You may use the water for all purposes except drinking. We suggest using bottled water until a “safe”, **NOT DETECTED** is obtained on the Coliform Bacteria Test sample. This may take several chlorinations in an attempt to get rid of all the “crud” in the well and distribution system. Hopefully, a single disinfection will clean up the well.

We will be working with you; your well driller and/ or pump installer until a **NOT DETECTED** (safe) sample is received. Your well driller/ pump installer is not required to re-disinfect a well or pump, as a result of water samples that are collected from a location other than the sampling faucet required. If you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact us at **(989) 743-2390**. The Sanitarians are in the office between 8:00 and 9:30am, Monday through Friday, unless previously engaged with business meetings.