

# Microbiological Sample Collecting Procedures for Pools

The Public Swimming Pools Regulation (A.R. 204/2014) requires a weekly water sample from all pools. These samples are submitted to the Provincial Laboratory of Public Health (ProvLab) for microbiological testing. A pool that operates at less than 30°C (86°F) will be tested for Heterotrophic Plate Count and Total Coliforms. A pool that operates at greater than 30°C (86°F) will be tested for *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*, Heterotrophic Plate Count and Total Coliforms. The results of the microbiological test provide valuable data regarding the microbial quality of the pool water. For more information about microbiological sample results please refer to the document "Interpretation of Microbiological Samples Testing Results for Pools."

Read all the information in this handout before you collect a sample. You will need to follow the instructions below to get a good sample that is not contaminated.

## What do I need to know about water testing?

Samples are only accepted if they are:

- Collected in a sampling bottle from the Provincial Laboratory of Public Health.
- Sent with a completed requisition form.
- Affixed with an ID label onto the sample bottle.
- Collected directly from the pool basin.

## DO NOT:

- Rinse the sampling bottle.
- Put the cap on the pool deck (it can get contaminated).
- Open the bottle until you are ready to collect your sample.
- Touch the inside of the cap, mouth, or neck of the bottle.
- Remove the sodium thiosulphate powder in the bottle.

## Where do I collect a water sample?

Take samples from the pool basin at a point near an outlet (skimmer or gutter).

### How do I collect a water sample?

1. Wash your hands with soap and warm water. Even a clean hand may have millions of bacteria.
2. Remove the cap of the sample bottle. Do not touch the top of the open bottle or the inside of the cap. Do not put the cap down.
3. Submerge the sample bottle in the water 200 - 400 mm (8 -16 inches) deep (up to your elbow). After the bottle is under water, move the bottle in a forward sweeping motion (i.e. away from you) until the water reaches the “fill line.” If you overfill the bottle you may empty the water in the bottle by “flicking” it away from you until the water level is at or near the “fill line.”
4. Put the cap on the bottle **right away**. Make sure the cap is secure, but do not over tighten it.
5. Put the identification label from the requisition form on the bottle. If you forget to put on the identification label, your sample will be rejected by the lab.
6. Completely fill out the requisition form and include the information below. If you miss anything on the requisition, your sample will be rejected by the lab.
  - pool facility name and daytime phone number
  - mailing address and postal code
  - collection site (e.g., pool or whirlpool)
  - legal land description and/or civic address
  - laboratory assigned access number
  - date and time sample was collected
  - name of person who collected the sample

Note: An information label can be created and attached to the requisition form to save time. The information on the label should include the above information as well as the name of the Agency to whom the results are reported (Alberta Health Services).

Refer to the example to the right:

<p><b>Pool Facility Name</b> <b>Basin Name</b> <b>Access Number</b></p> <p><b>Collected By:</b> _____ <b>Phone #</b> _____</p> <p>Collection Site: _____</p> <p>AHS – Zone - Environmental Public Health</p>
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7. Put the sample and requisition form in the plastic bag that came with the sample bottle.
8. Put the sample in a cooler filled with ice packs and bring it to a drop-off location near you as soon as possible.

### How do I deliver the sample for testing?

It is important that the samples are delivered promptly. Remember:

- Samples should be collected just before delivery to your drop-off location. Refrigerate the sample if immediate delivery is not possible.
- You can find information about where and when you can drop off your sample by calling your local Environmental Public Health office or look under “Water Sample Bottle Pick up & Drop off Locations” at <https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/eph/Page15233.aspx>

### How do I find out the results?

- If your results are unsatisfactory, a Public Health Inspector will notify you and discuss a recommended course of action.
- To understand your results, review the “Interpretation of Microbiological Sample Test Results for Public Swimming Pools”, available at <https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/wf/eph/wf-eph-interpret-microbiological-sample-results-pools.pdf>

Please notify your Public Health Inspector if your pool will not be sampled due to shutdown or maintenance.

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Contact us at 1-833-476-4743 or [submit a request online](#) at [ahs.ca/eph](https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/eph/).

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