



**New Zealand
School Property Agency**

What to do if testing detects contamination in your water

Contents

Water supply is contaminated by E. coli or exceeds safe levels for another contaminant.....	2
Water supply is contaminated by coliforms but tests free of E. coli	3

Water supply is contaminated by E. coli or exceeds safe levels for another contaminant

If E. coli is detected, this means there are likely to be bacteria in your drinking water, which could make students and staff sick. You must take immediate steps to address the issue and minimise the health risk.

If you have a water safety plan, refer to this for critical actions. At minimum, you are required to:

- Close off taps and drinking fountains, and post notices which clearly state that the water is 'unsafe to drink unless boiled'.
- Make alternative arrangements to supply drinking water such as:
 - providing bottled water or,
 - sourcing safe water using a registered water carrier service (i.e. tanker operator) accessing water that complies with the drinking water standards.
- If your supply is registered, notify Taumata Arowai by completing a notification through Hinekōrako. You will need to record what you plan to do to resolve the issue.
- Initiate an investigation to identify the possible cause of contamination. This is most likely to be due to organic, animal or soil contamination. We recommend you work through the following checklist of maintenance tasks:
 - Check and clean roofs and gutters where there are obvious organic material and/or animal or bird faeces
 - Check for contamination at bore heads including ensuring stock are excluded
 - Flush water storage tanks if these have not been cleaned for several years
 - Ensure filters and UV disinfection units have been recently serviced including replacing cartridges and UV lamps etc.
 - Check for leaks in the network and cracks in water storage tanks
 - 9+Add suitable disinfectant (not household bleach) to the supply, to any stored water, and flush the disinfected water through the school network. Find guidance for emergency disinfection of your self-supplied drinking water [here](#). These measures are intended only for an emergency response to an identified bacterial contaminant in your drinking water. IMPORTANT: This guidance is not intended for everyday drinking purposes.

- After cleaning and critical maintenance, you will need to re-test the water 3 times. The supply can only be deemed safe to drink once 3 sequential samples (taken at least 1 day apart) have tested free of E. coli.
- Enter your water re-test results on the Argest portal as soon as you receive them to confirm your school's water supply is safe to drink and ensure there is an audit trail of your school's test results.

Water supply is contaminated by coliforms but tests free of E. coli

The presence of coliform bacteria indicates that contamination may be present although, E. coli bacteria have not been identified. The larger the number of bacteria, the more significant the likely level of contamination.

Coliform bacteria will most likely be due to organic, animal or soil contamination of your water supply. Although you do not need to stop drinking the water, you should investigate possible causes of contamination and work through the following checklist of maintenance tasks.

- Check and clean roofs and gutters where there are obvious organic material and/or animal or bird faeces present.
- Check for contamination at bore heads, including ensuring stock are excluded .
- Flush water storage tanks where these have not been cleaned for several years.
- Ensure filters and UV disinfection units have been recently serviced including replacement of cartridges and UV lamps if required etc.
- Check for leaks in the network and cracks in water storage tanks.

Once you have completed your investigation and completed necessary cleaning, flushing, maintenance or repairs, you should continue to test and monitor coliform levels as part of your monthly testing to confirm you have resolved the issue.



**New Zealand
School Property Agency**

New Zealand Government
Te Kāwanatanga o Aotearoa