

At the Ontario Water Testing Centre (OWTC), we strive to provide you with the most accurate, precise and timely results possible. For us to achieve this, we stand by certain requirements and standards (ISO 17025:2017) regarding your samples. The following is a list of requirements and procedures that we ask you to follow when submitting samples to us for microbiological analysis.

Sample Requirements:

1. The sample must be clearly labeled with the location or identification using an adhesive label or permanent marker. The sample identification must also be recorded on the OWTC Sample Requisition Form (LCF 3.2.2).
2. Samples must be received at the lab <48 hours from time of collection. Record the date and time of sampling on the OWTC Sample Requisition Form (LCF 3.2.2).
3. Swabs must be between 2°C and 10°C unless the swab is received at the lab less than 3 hours after sampling time. Product should be stored and transported as intended to be sold (refrigerated, room temperature or frozen).
4. For temperature sensitive samples, a cooler with ice packs must be used during transportation, as deliveries may not occur on the same day as pick up.
5. Samples must not be damaged.
6. **Samples must be sufficient to cover all tests required.**
Indicator Organism Enumeration: (*Aerobic Bacteria, Coliforms, E. coli, S. aureus and Yeast/Mold*)
 - One cotton stick swab or **11g+** of product to perform all Enumeration methods
 - If a non-OWTC supplied swab is used, ensure there is sufficient volume in the swab tube for each test requested (at least 1mL is required for each Enumeration method)Pathogen Detection:
 - *Salmonella*: One swab (stick or sponge) or **25g+** of product.
 - *E. coli O157*: One swab (stick or sponge) or **25g+** of product.
 - *Listeria spp.*: One swab (stick or sponge) or **125g+** of product.
 - **It is recommended to use sponge swabs for pathogen detection; however stick swabs may be beneficial for small crevices.**
7. Record all of the required information - listed below - on the OWTC Sample Requisition Form (LCF 3.2.2). Make sure that it is clear, legible and up to date.
 - Invoice & Report to Information (Company name, contact, address, Email & Phone)
 - Date & Time Sampled
 - Sample Description
 - Required Test
 - Relinquished by
 - Special Instructions (*optional*)

Please include your OWTC Sample Requisition Form in a plastic bag to keep dry during shipping. You can also email your form to us using our email below. Courtesy emails detailing amount of samples and date shipped are welcome and will result in quicker processing times. All reports or results will only be released to persons listed on the requisition form. Failure to comply with our requirements can result in declining samples.

Analysis Reports will be withheld until completion of all analytical tests, especially those yielding an adverse (ie. Presumptive Positive result). Analysis Reports will also be withheld until payment of overdue invoices has been made.

OWTC does not provide statements of conformity on microbiological analysis samples (with the exception of regulated waters under the Safe Water Drinking Act, where values are reported without uncertainty calculation) . OWTC does not provide acceptance criteria for its selected methods. An acceptance criterion is dependent on the client's requirements and is the duty of the client to determine their acceptance requirement needs. OWTC will only report the analyzed value as determined.

Sampling Procedures

- Wash your hands thoroughly to avoid contamination and replace gloves between samples.
- Swabs should be stored in the refrigerator and not used beyond the listed expiry date.
- For product sampling, prepare sampling containers (sterile container or bag) and label with the sample identification using an adhesive label or permanent marker.
- For swab sampling, label the swab with the location or identification using an adhesive label or permanent marker. Keep swabs cold (2°C and 10°C) until packaging for transportation.
- After environmental swab sampling, the surface should be sanitized.
- After sampling, place the completed sample requisition form in a zipper sealed bag and keep with samples for packaging and transport.

Cotton Stick Swabs

1. Select the sampling location (area measuring 10cm X 10cm or less).
2. Keeping the tube upright, aseptically remove the swab from the tube and gently swab the area up and down, left and right while rotating the tip until the entire area has been covered.
3. Place swab back into broth tube, close and tightly secured the cap and place in a zipper sealed bag.

Sponge Swabs

1. Select the sampling location (area measuring 30cm X 30cm or less).
2. Open and remove blue gloves, if applicable.
 - a. It is recommended to always use gloves when swabbing to maintain integrity of the sample, but the configuration of products varies, your product may provide gloves or may not, be sure to follow the manufacturer's instructions and your internal protocols as applicable.
3. Hold the bag upright. Open bag and squeeze the sponge from the outside of the bag (sponge should be wet but not dripping) and remove the sponge from the bag.
4. Gently swab the area up and down, flip the sponge over and swab left and right until the entire area has been covered.
5. Place the sponge back in the bag and dispose of the blue gloves. Press the bag to remove excess air and roll the top down 3-4 times. Fold the metal tabs to seal the bag. Place swab in a zipper sealed bag.

Product

1. With the sampling container ready, aseptically place the product in the container (sample should be sent as product is intended to be sold)
2. Place each sample in separate zipper sealed bags and store appropriately until packing and transportation.

Cooler Packing

1. Ensure the cooler is clean and in good condition.
2. Wrap each ice pack in paper towel to prevent sample freezing. Place icepacks in bottom of cooler.
3. Place samples in the cooler. Use bubble wrap when appropriate to prevent breakage and fill gaps.
4. Place more ice packs on top. Ensure everything is secure for transport.
5. Place the sample requisition forms (in sealed bag) in the top of the cooler.
6. Seal the cooler and set for transportation.