How to Collect a Composite *Enterococcus* Beach Water Sample

Only designated priority beaches may submit *Enterococcus* samples. Samples submitted by non-designated beaches will be rejected. Contact your local public health inspector if you have questions or concerns about priority beaches or recreational water quality.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Materials supplied by AHS (per sampling event)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Three 50 mL conical tubes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One ProvLab microbiological bottle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One ProvLab Microbiological Water Analysis Requisition form</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One plastic resealable sample bag</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two bright pink labels</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Materials supplied by sampler</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shoulder length gloves (vet use)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preprinted beach name/access number labels (optional)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hip waders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ice packs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooler</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life jacket/personal flotation device</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Important Note:* If a cyanobacterial (blue-green algal) bloom is present, avoid direct contact with the water as some types of cyanobacteria may cause skin irritation. The use of hip waders and shoulder length plastic gloves (available from veterinary supply stores) will help prevent contact with a bloom. A cyanobacteria reference guide, which includes pictures, can be found in the Frequently Asked Questions document located at [www.ahs.ca/bga](http://www.ahs.ca/bga).

**Sample Collection**

1. Choose 3 sampling locations along the beach in areas of greatest use by bathers, where the water is about 1 meter or 3 feet deep (approximately hip deep – see picture 2). If there are waves or swells consider sampling in shallower water.
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2. If the water is calm, wait for sediment/debris to settle before collecting the water sample. Collect the sample from an incoming wave if present.

*Note: If a cyanobacterial (blue-green algal) bloom is present, try to minimize the amount of algae in the sample.*

3. With clean hands or gloves, hold the 50 mL conical tube near its base with one hand and remove the cap with the other hand.

4. Tip the tube upside down, then dip it 15-30 cm (6-12 in) below the water surface and collect a full tube of water.

5. Pour out enough water to reach the 50 mL mark on the tube. Replace the cap on the tube.

6. Repeat for the other two sites. Once sampling is completed at all three sites, exit the water.

7. Pour the water from all three 50 mL tubes into one ProvLab microbiological bottle. The total volume of the composite water sample in the bottle is approximately 150 mL (below the 200 mL mark on the bottle). Replace the cap immediately so it is secure but not overtightened to prevent the lid from cracking.

*Note: Do not touch the inside of the cap or the rim of the conical tubes and microbiological sample bottle.*

**Submitting the Samples**

1. Stick the ID label from the requisition form onto the bottle (see picture 3).
2. Complete the requisition form and ensure the collection site identifies “BEACH (COMPOSITE SAMPLE)” (see picture 4).
3. Affix a bright pink sticker on the requisition form and bottle (see pictures 3 and 4).
4. Place the bottle into the plastic bag and place the requisition form in the side pouch.
5. Place the bottle in an upright position in a cooler with ice packs.
6. Immediately transport the sample to an Environmental Public Health office, Alberta Precision Laboratory (APL, formerly ProvLab) Calgary, or APL Edmonton.

*Picture 3: Bottle with labels*
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Notes:

- Samples will be rejected if:
  - the ID sticker from the requisition form is not attached to the bottle;
  - a sample is received at the lab more than 24 hours after collection;
  - a sample is received at ProvLab Edmonton or Calgary outside the accepted days and times indicated below; and
  - a sample is submitted from a non-priority beach without prior approval from a Public Health Inspector.

- Labels can be made to assist with filling out the requisition form. Labels must include the water body name, beach name, and beach access number. They also may include the collector name and phone number.

- Discard the 50 mL conical tubes after each sampling event. These may not be used to collect future samples.

- Water sample bottle drop off locations for each Zone can be found on the Sample Your Water webpage at www.ahs.ca/eph/Page15233.aspx

- Contact your local public health inspector to determine water sample submission days and times. If delivering samples directly to Alberta Precision Laboratories (APL, formerly ProvLab), samples will only be accepted:
  - APL Calgary: Monday to Wednesday before 4:00 pm
  - APL Edmonton: Monday to Thursday before 12:00 pm (noon)
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1. Place bright pink label here.
2. Affix the pre-printed label here that indicates (or write by hand): the water body name, the beach name, the beach access number and the collector’s name and phone number.
3. Indicate “BEACH COMPOSITE SAMPLE”.
4. Indicate the Water Sample Type: BEACH.
5. Remove this label and place on sample bottle.
6. The date and time must be completed. Samples will be rejected if left blank or received at the lab more than 24 hours after collection.

For more information, please contact your nearest Environmental Public Health office.

Edmonton Main Office  
780-735-1800  
Grande Prairie Main Office  
780-513-7517

Calgary Main Office  
403-943-2288  
Red Deer Main Office  
403-356-6366

Lethbridge Main Office  
403-388-8689  
www.ahs.ca/eph

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