

Water Microbiology

Total Coliform Bacteria - The total number of colony forming units (CFU's) in 100 milliliters of water. The total coliform test is the current recommended test for determining the presence or absence of coliform organisms in water, and thus, determining if disinfections methods are sufficient. Total coliform bacteria may not be pathogenic (disease causing) themselves, but simply indicate that there could be pathogenic organisms present. The total coliform test will reflect environmental and fecal coliform concentrations in a water sample. If total coliforms are present, a fecal coliform test is required to determine if the bacteria are from a human or animal waste source.

Fecal Coliform Bacteria - The total number of colony forming units (CFU's) in 100 milliliters of water. The fecal coliform test is generally performed to determine if organisms (potentially pathogenic) are present in a water sample. Fecal coliforms may not always be pathogenic themselves, but indicate the water is polluted with intestinal bacteria and may contain pathogens. The fecal coliform test is often performed to determine if a septic tank might be polluting a local groundwater well source.