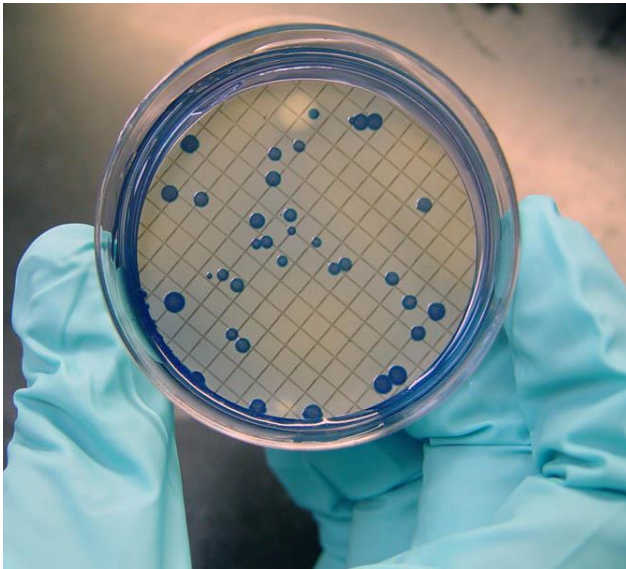


# Faecal Coliforms



Faecal coliform bacteria are the most common microbiological contaminants of natural waters. Faecal coliform live in the digestive tracks of warm-blooded animals, including humans, and are excreted in the faeces.

Although most of these bacteria are not harmful and are part of the normal digestive system, some are pathogenic to humans. Those that are pathogenic can cause disease such as gastroenteritis, ear infections, typhoid, dysentery, hepatitis A, and cholera.

A faecal coliform test is used to determine whether water has been contaminated with faecal matter. The presence of faecal coliform indicates the possible presence of organisms that can cause illness.

The test can be performed relatively quickly and easily. The EPA has set acceptable limits for faecal coliform in water based upon the use of the water. For example, drinking water cannot contain any faecal coliform but water for swimming may contain up to 400 faecal coliform colonies/ 100 ml.



## The Faecal Coliform Test

A water sample is collected in a sterile container.

The water sample is filtered and the filter is placed in a sterile petri dish with a special nutrient solution. The dish is incubated for 24 hours at a constant temperature.

After the incubation, the number of faecal coliform colonies are counted. The results are calculated and reported as the number of faecal coliform colonies per 100 ml of water.

## How do faecal coliforms get into streams, rivers dams and lakes?

Large amounts of faecal coliform are released in the waste of farm animals and can be washed into streams by runoff from rain or irrigation.

Urban areas contribute to faecal coliform contamination when wastes from dogs, cats and humans are carried into storm drains, streams, and dams during storms.

Faecal coliform can also enter streams from illegal or leaky sanitary sewer connections, poorly functioning septic tanks, and wastewater treatment plants that are not functioning properly.

If you are concerned about possible contamination of your water, please feel free to contact BN Kirk (Natal) cc on (031) 205 1245 or send an email to [labmanager@bnkirk.co.za](mailto:labmanager@bnkirk.co.za) for a full list of accredited tests and an obligation free quote.