



# Montgomery County Health Department

110 West South Boulevard  
Crawfordsville, IN 47933

**Public Health**  
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

**Montgomery County  
Health Department**

## Understanding Pool Sample Results

### What is a Heterotrophic Plate Count?

This part of the test takes 48 hours to complete. Heterotrophic plate count (HPC) is a method that measures colony formation on culture media of heterotrophic bacteria in water. Thus the HPC test (also known as Standard Plate Count) can be used to measure the overall bacteriological quality of water in public, semi-public and private water systems. Sudden increases in HPC above levels typically seen may indicate that bacterial regrowth has occurred in the pool water or in the filtration system. Levels reading 200 bacteria colonies per milliliter will be recorded and a bad sample.

### How to read the Present/Absent Testing of the pool water:

The laboratory results are reported as Coliform Absent or Coliform Present. Absent means that Coliforms WERE NOT present in the sample. Present means that Coliforms WERE present in the sample. Fecal Coliform Absent or Fecal Coliform Present is also reported. If the sample is Absent for Coliform, it will also be Absent for Fecal Coliform.

If Coliforms are present and Fecal Coliform is absent, then the water is considered unsafe and a potential health hazard. When both Coliforms and Fecal Coliform are present, the water is deemed to be an extreme health hazard. Either way in this case, the pool should be super-chlorinated immediately.

**Fecal Coliform:** The presence of fecal coliform bacteria in aquatic environments indicates that the water has been contaminated with the fecal material of man or other animals. The presence of fecal contamination is an indicator that a potential health risk exists for individuals exposed to this water.

**Coliform:** A group of bacteria made up of primarily 18 different bacteria. These bacteria are often found in animal waste and sewage, and soil and vegetation. Coliform bacteria are not harmful in most cases, but if they are in your water supply it is an indicator that other harmful and disease causing bacteria may have also entered your pool water.