

HOW WE SAMPLE BREAKDOWN



HOW DO WE SAMPLE OUR WATERWAYS?

Miami Waterkeeper samples key recreational areas in Miami Dade County once a week. Water samples are collected at these sites and are measured for the presence of Fecal Indicator Bacteria (FIB). FIBs are used to indicate whether bacteria that cause human illness are likely to be present in the water. The EPA sets a standard for the safe level of FIBs in recreational waters. High concentrations of FIBs can indicate poor water quality and risk to human health.

WHEN IS A SWIM ADVISORY ISSUED?

EPA standards tell us when the water quality is considered “poor.” That is, the water quality could cause people recreating to experience skin itching, ear or eye irritation, gastrointestinal distress, or other illnesses. The Florida Department of Health (DOH) is the agency that oversees swim advisories. The DOH issues an advisory when two consecutive water samples exceed EPA standards for water quality.

Remember: the FIB, enterococci, is an indicator. It just tells us that there may be harmful viruses or bacteria present in the water that can make people sick. We aren’t able to determine the source of these harmful viruses or bacteria from our testing - only genetic analysis can do that. Also, Miami Waterkeeper shares water quality data, but we cannot issue formal “swim advisories.”

Be sure to check Swim Guide, our website, our social media, the Florida DOH Healthy Beaches program website, or your local news outlet to determine if an advisory is in place.

HOW ARE THE SAMPLES ANALYZED?

Through generous grant funding and sponsorship, Miami Waterkeeper monitors recreational sites weekly for enterococci -- the FIB measured in saltwater. By following EPA protocols, Miami Waterkeeper evaluates FIB levels in water samples using the IDEXX system. Here are the steps:

