

Health and safety around water

Water sampling activities should be avoided in dangerous conditions or locations. Try to select a site with easy access to the water, where you can stay in a stable area of the bank during the process without needing to overstretch or balance on uneven ground. Avoid sampling from unstable stream banks, poorly anchored railings and slippery rocks.

As a general rule of thumb, water quality sampling should be led by adults and not alone. Be sure that the person that is helping you during the sampling is able to react in case of an accident happens and/or you fall into the water, e.g. able to swim, have a phone for asking for help in case of emergency. Bring clothes and shoes adapted to the area you are expecting to collect the sample, and the weather conditions. Sampling should not be done when conditions do not ensure that it can be done in a safe manner (icy conditions or during extremely wet weather/flooding).

When collecting and manipulating the water sample it is recommended to always use rubber gloves. In particular, gloves should be worn to avoid water contact with open cuts and wounds to reduce the risk of leptospirosis (or Weil's disease). Leptospirosis is a bacterial disease passed from animals (most commonly rats) to humans via infected urine. Infection with leptospires can cause no symptoms at all, a mild flu-like illness, or a more severe illness called Weil's disease, with jaundice and kidney failure. Symptoms usually develop 7–12 days after initial infection with leptospires, though rarely the incubation period can be as short as two to three days or as long as 30 days.

After sampling wash your hands thoroughly. Additionally, check for ticks on your clothes and skin. Ticks are most common in long grass and the countryside where there is livestock, but could be also present in urban areas.