

Guidelines for Using Water Safely

During a Boil Water Advisory

The guidelines below are provided to residents further to the boil water advisory issued by the Medical Officer of Health.

Boil Water Advisory:

The Medical Officer of Health issues an advisory for various reasons, for example:

- the laboratory has confirmed that bacteria, viruses or parasites are in the drinking water.
- a water main has broken or there has been severe flooding.
- there is not enough disinfectant in the water to treat possible sources of contamination.
- an outbreak of illness in the community is linked to the water.

Water for drinking and food preparation:

- Use only boiled or bottled water.
- Boil the water. Bring tap water to a rolling boil for one minute. Then store the water in a clean, sanitized, food grade container. Water should be covered and refrigerated until ready for serving.
- All water used for drinking, cooking, making ready-to-eat foods such as infant formula, juices, or Jell-O, making ice, washing fruit and vegetable must be boiled or bottled.
- Discard all ice made previously. Disinfect the ice cube trays. Make ice using boiled, cooled water.
- Water filtration devices (such as carbon filters or reverse osmosis) do not make the water safe for drinking. They are not designed to remove all contamination and they do not destroy all disease-causing germs.

If you have a weakened immune system, always follow your physician's advice. You might be advised to use bottled water or boiled water for



drinking/cooking even without a boil water advisory.

Dishwashing and surface sanitizing:

- **Commercial dishwasher:** If your dishwasher has a hot setting of 60°C (140°F) or higher with a sanitizing rinse of 82°C (180°F), it safely disinfects dishes. If you are unsure, after finishing the cycle, immerse dishes for one minute in a solution of 30 ml (1 oz.) bleach mixed with 13.5 litres (3 gallons) of warm water. Air dry dishes.
- **Manual dishwashing:** Wash dishes in soapy hot water, rinse in clean warm water, then immerse dishes for one minute in a solution of 30 ml (1 oz.) bleach mixed with 13.5 litres (3 gallons) of water. Air dry dishes.
- **Surfaces:** Countertops, chopping boards or utensils should be washed with soap and hot water first, and then disinfected with a bleach solution. Mix 60 ml (¼ cup) bleach into 4.5 litres (1 gallon) water and ensure a contact time of at least one minute. Do not reuse or store this solution, but make it fresh daily.

Personal hygiene:

- **Hand washing:** Use boiled (and cooled), bottled or treated water (see disinfection solution chart) and soap to wash your hands. Alcohol-based hand sanitizers containing more than 60 per cent alcohol can be used when hands are not visibly dirty. Wet wipes used for cleaning babies at diaper change are not effective for disinfecting hands.
- **Bathing:** Adults and teens may shower with untreated water as long as no water is swallowed. Older children may be given a shower with a hand held showerhead, avoiding the face. Younger children should be sponge-bathed instead of bathing in a tub because they are likely to swallow tub water.
- **Teeth brushing:** Use only boiled (and cooled) or bottled water is used for teeth brushing because water is often swallowed during brushing.

Household water safety:

- **Laundry:** Continue to do laundry the way you usually do. Items should be dried in a dryer for at least 30 minutes.
- **Wading pools:** Water is not safe to use in wading pools as it can get into the mouths of small children, providing a possibility for infection.
- **Cleaning toys:** If your child has a diarrheal illness, toys should be cleaned and disinfected. If toys are visibly soiled, wash them first with soap and water and then disinfect with a freshly prepared bleach solution of 60 ml (1/4 cup) bleach into 4.5 litres (1 gallon) of water. Dip toys into solution for one minute and air-dry. Cloth and plush toys should be washed and dried in a clothes dryer at a heat setting for 30 minutes.

Safety precautions:

With a Boil Water Advisory in effect, you will likely use your stove and kettle more. To prevent fires and injuries, please keep these safety tips in mind:

- **When handling boiled water.** To avoid scalding, place pot on inside burner out of reach of children. Do not put more water in pot than you can comfortably lift. Check the cord on your electric kettle and ensure it is not bare or frayed.
- **When using the stove:** Stay in kitchen, avoid loose fitting clothing, turn pot handles toward centre of stove, beware of flammable objects and keep children safely out of kitchen.

When the Boil Water Advisory is cancelled:

The Medical Officer of Health will lift the Boil Water Advisory only after test results indicate the water is safe.

- Run cold water faucets and drinking water fountains for one minute before using water.
- Run water softeners through one regeneration cycle.
- Drain and refill hot water heaters set below 45°C (113°F).
- Consult the manufacturer for specific guidance when dealing with: water treatment devices, pool filters, hot tubs, refrigerator ice makers, etc.
- Flush all garden hoses by running cold water through them for one minute.