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Boil Water Advisory Fact Sheets

BOIL WATER ADVISORY Common Questions and Answer

For more information contact your local health unit at 613-345-5685 or www.healthunit.org

Treatment of Water

Water can be made safe for drinking by using either heat or chemicals (chlorine) to kill harmful micro-organisms.

- **Boil it** - Bring water in pot to a rolling boil for at least 1 minute. If you are using an electric kettle make sure the cord is not bare or frayed and choose a kettle without an automatic shut-off feature (an automatic shut off kettle does not allow water to boil for one minute). The flat taste of boiled water can be improved by pouring it back and fourth from one container to another and/or allowing it to stand for a few hours. Boil as much water in a pot as you can comfortably lift without spilling. Caution should always be exercised when handling boiling water to minimize the risk of burns.
- **Chlorinate it** - Add 1.25 ml (1/4 teaspoon) of liquid household bleach (not lemon-scented or fabric-safe) (5.25% Sodium Hypochlorite - Javex®) to 4½ litres (1 gallon) of water. Mix well and allow to stand for 15 minutes. This treatment will not kill parasites.
- Treated water should be stored in food grade containers and refrigerated. Use within three days.
- If boiling water or disinfecting your water supply is impractical you should seek an alternative potable water supply such as bottled water or municipal water if you are on a well.
- Always follow your physician's and dietician's advice. You might be advised to use bottled water or to boil water for drinking/cooking, even in the absence of a boil water advisory.

Food and Kitchen Water Safety

- How do I use water when the boil water advisory has been issued? All water that is used for drinking, washing fruits or vegetables or making ready to eat foods such as infant formula, juices or Jello should be made with boiled or bottled water. Discard all ice made previously and disinfect the ice cube trays.
- I have a dishwasher. Is it safe to use? If your dishwasher has a hot setting of 82°C or higher, it safely disinfects dishes. If your dishwasher does not have a hot setting, after finishing the cycle, soak dishes for 1 minute in a solution of 1 oz (30 ml) of bleach mixed with 3 gallons

(13.5 litres) of lukewarm water. Let dishes air dry.

- I wash dishes by hand. How do I disinfect them? There are three ways that dishes can be washed safely:
 1. Wash and rinse dishes in boiled and cooled water.
 2. Wash dishes in soapy hot water and rinse with boiled water.
 3. Wash dishes in soapy hot water and rinse them in the following bleach solution for 1 minute: 1 oz (30 ml) bleach into 3 gallons (13.5 litres) of water.
 4. Allow the dishes to air dry.
- How do I disinfect countertops or chopping boards? Countertops, chopping boards or utensils which come into contact with raw meat should be washed with soap and hot water first, and then disinfected with a bleach solution stronger than that used for emergency hand disinfection. Mix $\frac{1}{4}$ cup (about 60 ml) bleach into 1 gallon (4.5 litres) water for this purpose and ensure a contact time of at least one minute. Do not reuse or store this solution, but make it fresh daily.

Personal Hygiene

- Can I use the water for hand washing? If the boil water advisory has been issued because of an outbreak, water can be used for hand washing after the following emergency water treatment: Place 1 .5 oz (about 45 ml) liquid bleach in 10 gallons (45 litres) water. Mix and let stand for at least 10 minutes prior to use.
- How else can I disinfect my hands? You can use alcohol-based hand disinfectants, containing more than 60% alcohol in addition to conventional soap and water hand washing. The wet wipes used for cleaning babies at diaper change are not effective for disinfecting hands and should not be used for this purpose.
- Can I take a bath? Adults and teens may shower with untreated water as long as no water is swallowed. Older children could also 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.
- What about brushing my teeth? The use of boiled and cooled or bottled water is highly recommended for brushing teeth because water is often swallowed during brushing.

Household Water

- Should I change the way I am doing laundry? No, continue doing laundry the way you usually do. If you have to launder sheets heavily soiled with feces, carefully remove soil before you place the sheets into the washer, without much agitation of the cloth. Use rubber gloves when handling heavily soiled sheets.
- Is the water safe to fill wading pools for children? No, the water is not safe to use in wading pools. Water usually gets into the mouths of small children, providing a possibility for infection.
- Should I clean/disinfect toys? If your child has a diarrheal illness toys should be cleaned and

disinfected. If the toys are visibly soiled, wash them first with soap and water and then disinfect with a freshly prepared bleach solution (¼ cup (about 60 ml) bleach into 1 gallon (4.5 litres) of water). Dip toys into this solution for 1 minute and air-dry them. Cloth and plush toys could be washed or dry-cleaned.

- I have a water filtration device installed. Does this make the water safe for drinking or cooking? Yes and no.
 - *Yes, if your water filtration system is devised to remove and/or kill bacteria, parasites and viruses, it is recommended that a water sample be taken after the filter to ensure no bacteria is present prior to using water for drinking and other purposes. This type of system may be a U.V. light, ceramic or glass fibre filter, chlorinator, distiller or ozonator.*
 - *No, if your water filtration is devised to remove chemicals, organics and inorganics, such as a reverse-osmosis or carbon filter, (ie. Brita) then no, the water is not safe to drink.*

DISINFECTION SOLUTION CHART			
<i>Water use</i>	<i>Amount of Water</i>	<i>Amount of Bleach</i>	<i>Contact Time</i>
<i>Drinking</i>	<i>4.5 litres (1 gallon)</i>	<i>1.25 ml (¼ teaspoon)</i>	<i>15 minutes</i>
<i>Hand washing</i>	<i>45 litres (10 gallons)</i>	<i>45 ml (1.5 oz.)</i>	<i>10 minutes</i>
<i>Dishwashing</i>	<i>13.5 litres (3 gallons)</i>	<i>30 ml (1 oz.)</i>	<i>1 minute - then air dry</i>
<i>Countertops, chopping boards</i>	<i>4.5 litres (1 gallon)*</i>	<i>60 ml (¼ cup)</i>	<i>1 minute - then air dry</i>
<i>Toys</i>	<i>4.5 litres (1 gallon)*</i>	<i>60 ml (¼ cup)</i>	<i>1 minute - then air dry</i>

* 15ml in a 1 litre bottle, change daily

Removal of Boil Water Advisory

- How does the Medical Officer of Health decide when to “lift” a boil water advisory? The local authority will lift the boil water advisory only after it has been determined that the water is safe.
- What should I do after the boil water advisory is lifted? Run cold water faucets for 1 minute before using the water. Run drinking fountains for 1 minute before using the water. Run water softeners through a regeneration cycle. Consult with the manufacturer for specific guidance when re-starting treatment devices. Drain and refill hot water heaters set below 45°C (normal setting is 60°C). Flush all garden hoses by running cold water through them for 1 minute. Backwash pool filters and change media or water.

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