

Boil Water Advisory

How to Use Your Water Safely

Follow these important guidelines during a boil water advisory. In some cases, there may be additional requirements.

What are the reasons for a boil water advisory?

The Medical Officer of Health issues a boil water advisory for various reasons such as:

- 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.

How do I use water safely when a boil water advisory has been issued?

Tap water should be brought to a rapid, rolling boil for one minute. Boiled water can be stored in the refrigerator in clean containers until needed. Use this water for:

- Drinking
- Washing fruits and vegetables
- Making juice, tea and coffee
- Preparing food and baby formula
- Making ice
- Brushing teeth and soaking dentures

Bottled water may be used as an alternative.

Discard all ice, formula, and juices that were made before the boil water advisory was issued.

Can I still do laundry?

Yes. Continue doing laundry as usual.

Does a Water Filtration Device make the water safe to Drink?

No. The water must be boiled. Water filtration devices such as carbon filters and reverse osmosis do not remove all disease-causing germs.

Can I use tap water for washing hands?

Yes. Make sure to wash hands properly, rubbing all parts of the hands with soap for at least 20 seconds. After washing, use alcohol-based hand sanitizer containing at least 60 % alcohol.

Can I wash dishes?

Yes, but take these extra precautions.

- If dishes are washed by hand they should be washed and rinsed in hot tap water, then soaked in a dilute bleach solution* for one minute and air dried.
- Dishwashers with a hot sanitizing cycle can safely sanitize dishes. If your dishwasher does not have a sanitizing setting, after finishing the cycle, soak dishes for one minute in a dilute bleach solution. Let dishes air dry.

* To make a dilute bleach solution, mix 20 mL (4 teaspoons) of bleach in 10 L (10 quarts) of tap water.

Is it safe to shower or bathe with the water?

Adults and older children can shower or bathe providing they don't swallow any water.

Younger children and infants should be sponge bathed to ensure they don't drink the water.

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When is the boil water advisory over?

A boil water advisory stays in effect until the Medical Officer of Health is satisfied that the water is safe. You will be notified when the boil water advisory is lifted.

What do I do after the boil water advisory?

- Run cold water faucets for at least one minute before using them.
- Ensure that appliances with water line connections, like refrigerators with water and ice dispensers, are flushed and sanitized according to the manufacturer's instructions.
- Change all carbon filters on water devices, for example, under counter carbon filters, refrigeration filters and jug style filters.
- Run water softeners through a regeneration cycle.

In the case of flooding or sewage contamination, drain and refill hot water heater if the temperature was set below 45 C.

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