

Public Guidance - How to Use Water Safely During a Boil Water Notice

1. How do I use water when a Boil Water Notice has been issued?

The water should NOT be used for drinking, making infant formula and juices, cooking, making ice, washing fruits, vegetables or brushing teeth. For these purposes, boiled or treated or bottled water should be used. The water should be brought to a rapid rolling boil for one minute. If there are children in the home, place the pot on the back burner to avoid scalds. Boil only as much water in the pot as you can comfortably lift without spilling. Discard all ice made previously. Make ice using cooled water that was previously boiled.

2. What is the purpose of boiling or treating the water?

Boiling the water destroys all the disease-causing microorganisms (pathogens) and is considered potable after cooling.

3. Can I take a bath or shower?

Adults and teens may take baths or showers with untreated water. Older children could also be given a shower with a hand-held showerhead, avoiding the face. Due to the likelihood that young children will drink bath water, they should be given a sponge bath instead of bathing them in a tub.

4. Can I use the water for handwashing?

The water may be used for handwashing as long as proper handwashing technique is being applied. Use a hand sanitizer (60% ethyl alcohol) after washing hands.

During an outbreak: After handwashing, apply hand sanitizer. You can use alcohol-based hand disinfectants, containing more than 60% alcohol. There are other kinds of gels or solutions also available on the market that can effectively disinfect the hands. These products are widely used in health care settings after washing hands or in situations when water is not available. The wet wipes used for cleaning babies at diaper changes are not effective for disinfecting hands and should not be used for this purpose.

5. Can the dishwasher be used to clean and disinfect utensils?

The water may be used for regular dishwashing at home, unless otherwise directed. During an outbreak: Sanitize your dishware after washing. Set your dish machine to the "Sanitize" cycle, if applicable, to adequately sanitize your dishware. Alternatively, after dishwashing, soak your dishware for 2 minutes in a 100-200ppm chlorine solution. Make this solution by adding 1 tsp (5mL) of regular unscented household bleach to every 1 litre of water.

6. Should I change the way I'm doing laundry?

No. Continue doing laundry the way you usually do.



7. Is the water safe to fill wading pools for children?

No. The water is not safe for use in wading pools. Water usually gets into the mouths of small children, providing a possibility of infection.

8. I have a water filtration device installed. Does this make the water safe for drinking or cooking?

No. Filtered water should also be brought to a rolling boil for one minute before drinking or using it for cooking. The units should be back-washed, disinfected, or replaced after the Boil Water Advisory has been rescinded. Contact your manufacturer or local Health Agency for more information.

9. How do I disinfect counter tops, chopping boards or utensils?

Counter tops, chopping boards or utensils should be washed with soap and sanitized with disinfected water. Mix 1 tsp (5mL) of bleach into 1 litre of water for this purpose. Do not reuse or store this solution. It must be made daily as the sanitizing solution loses its strength with time.

10. Can I brush my teeth with untreated water?

No. Untreated water may contain harmful microorganisms. Infection can occur even by swallowing only a small amount of water. Use cooled water that was previously boiled for brushing teeth. Approved bottled water is also acceptable.

11. Can I use bottled water or buy water from vending machines?

It would depend on when the water is bottled and how it is bottled. Local plants or vending machines that use the local water are acceptable only if the water undergoes acceptable further treatment to remove the contamination. Check with an Environmental Health Officer to determine if a certain brands of bottled water or vending machines are acceptable. Bottled water packaged or manufactured from out-of-town is acceptable.

12. Can I drink coffee from a coffee maker?

If tap water is heated in a machine to a temperature above 74°C for at least 15 seconds and the temperature is verified using a thermometer.