

## What are the reasons for a *boil water advisory*?

There are different reasons for issuing a boil water advisory.

1. A boil water advisory may be **based on bacteriological (microbial) examination**, including the finding of bacteria or parasites.
2. A boil water advisory may follow the occurrence of an **outbreak of illness** in the community that has been linked to consumption of the water.
3. A boil water advisory can be **based on information other than bacteriological examination** indicating that the water is not safe to drink. (e.g., the lack or absence of disinfection residual in the drinking water.)

The extent of restriction on water use depends on the situation and the reason for issuing a boil water advisory. Always follow any additional recommendations given by your public health inspector.

## General recommendations on how to use the water if a boil water advisory has been issued in your community.

### How do I use water when the boil water advisory 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 water or bottled water should be used. The water should be brought to a rapid rolling boil and boiled 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 a pot as you can comfortably lift without spilling. Discard all ice made previously and disinfect the ice cube trays. (Solution of 1part bleach to 9 parts water). ***Make ice using boiled, cooled water.***

### 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 from playing and splashing around.

### How can I disinfect my hands?

Wash hands for 20 seconds with hot water and soap. Make sure to get in between fingers, thumbs, and the back of your hands. You can also use alcohol-based hand disinfectants, containing more than 60% alcohol. These products are widely used in the health care setting after washing hands or in situations when water is not available.

### My child was ill with diarrhea. Should I clean and disinfect toys?

Yes, 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 (1/4 cup (about 60 ml) bleach in to 1 gallon (4.5 litres) of water). Dip toys in to this solution and air-dry them. Cloth and plush toys can be dry-cleaned in some situations, but it may be best to throw them out.

### **I have a dishwasher. Is it safe to use?**

If your dishwasher has a hot setting, 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 part bleach mixed with 9 parts warm water. Let dishes air dry.

### **I wash dishes by hand. How do I disinfect them?**

You could use boiled water for washing dishes. Dishes washed in soap and hot water can also be rinsed in boiled water or disinfected with the following bleach solution. Mix 1 part bleach into 9 parts warm water. Let soak for 1 minute. Let dishes air dry.

### **How do I disinfect counter tops, chopping boards or utensils which have come into contact with raw meat?**

Counter tops, chopping boards or utensils which have come into contact with raw meat should be washed with soap and hot water first, then disinfected with a bleach solution stronger than that used for emergency hand disinfection. Mix 2 parts bleach in 8 parts warm water. Let soak for 1 minute. Do not reuse or store this solution, but make it fresh daily.

### **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 any 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.

### **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.

### **My doctor told me I am immunocompromised. What should I do?**

Always follow your physician's and dietician's advice. You might be advised to use bottled water or to boil water for drinking and cooking, even in the absence of a boil water advisory.

### **What should I do after the boil water advisory is lifted?**

- Run cold water faucets for one minute before using the water.
- Run drinking fountains for one minute before using the water.
- Flush all garden hoses by running cold water through them for one minute.
- Run water softeners through a regeneration cycle.
- Drain and refill hot water heaters set below 45°Celsius (normal setting is 60°Celsius).

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#### FOR MORE INFORMATION

Call the ministry **INFOline** at 1-800-268-1154  
(Toll-free in Ontario only)  
In Toronto, call 416-314-5518  
TTY 1-800-387-5559  
Hours of operation: 8:30 am – 5:00 pm

**Ministry of Environment**  
Information Centre: 1-800-565-4923  
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1-877-424-1300

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