

Q & A Boil Water Advisory

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

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

This water may be used for laundry and bathing (excluding small children) but **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 rolling boil for at least 1 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. *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.

Can I use the water for hand washing?

If the boil water advisory has been issued as a precaution and there is no outbreak of human illness, there is no need for additional hand disinfection with bleach solution or alcohol using the measures described below.

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 about 45 ml (1.5 oz) liquid household bleach in 45 litres (10 gallons) water. Mix and let stand for at least 15 minutes prior to use.

How else can I disinfect my hands?

You can 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. Please refer to information on “Hand Hygiene” through the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. The wet wipes used for cleaning babies at diaper

change are not effective for disinfecting hands and should not be used for the purpose.

My child was ill with diarrhea. Should I clean/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 of ¼ cup (about 60 ml) bleach in to 4.5 litres (1 gallon) of water. Dip toys in to this solution for at least 10 minutes and air-dry them. Cloth and plush toys could be washed, dried in a dryer or dry-cleaned.

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 wetting, after finishing the cycle, soak dishes for 1 minute in a solution of 30 ml (1 oz) of bleach mixed with 13.5 litres (3 gallons) of lukewarm 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 30 ml (1 oz) bleach in to 13.5 litres (3 gallons) of water at room temperature for at least 1 minute. Let dishes air dry.

What is disinfection?

Disinfection is a cleaning process which destroys most disease-causing micro-organisms (pathogens).

How do I disinfect countertops, chopping boards or utensils which have come into contact with raw meat?

Countertops, chopping boards or utensils which have 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 60 ml (1/4 cup) bleach in to 4.5 litres (1 gallon) water for this purpose and ensure a contact time of at least 45 seconds. 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 faeces, 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.

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 1 minute before drinking or using it for cooking.

My doctor told me I am immuno-compromised. What should I do?

Always follow your physician 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.

How does the medical officer of health decide when to "lift" boil water advisory?

The Ontario Drinking Water Standard (ODWS) state that the medical officer of health should continue the boil water advisory until the **standards** in the ODWS are no longer exceeded in two consecutive sets of samples taken from all parts of the distribution system that has been affected. The standards address issues that can affect health, such as the presence of *E.coli*. The medical officer of health may choose not to lift the boil water advisory even if two acceptable samples are obtained.

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. Flush all garden hoses by running cold water through them for 1 minute. Run water softeners through a regeneration cycle. Drain and refill hot water heaters set below 45°C (normal setting is 60°C).