

What do I do when a boil water advisory is issued?

What are the reasons for a boil water advisory?

There are different reasons for issuing a boil water advisory. These include:

- * Bacteriological/microbial testing that suggests possible widespread aquifer or groundwater contamination within a community;
- * An outbreak of illness that may be due to consumption of the water within a community;

HOW DO I USE WATER WHEN THE BOIL WATER ADVISORY HAS BEEN ISSUED FOR DRINKING WATER ONLY?

Where the boil advisory is for drinking water only, the water can be used for general domestic purposes, including handwashing, bathing and showering (providing the water is not swallowed), dishwashing and laundry.

Water used for drinking purposes should be brought to a rolling boil. This applies to water used for making infant formula and juices, cooking, making ice, washing fruits and vegetables, and brushing teeth. Discard all ice made before the boil water advisory was issued, and disinfect the ice cube trays. (*Caution: Place kettles and pots on back burners or away from counter edges to avoid spillage and scalding.*)

Alternate safe supplies of water, such as bottled water, can also be used.

Can I take a bath?

Adults and teens may shower or bath with untreated water as long as they can avoid swallowing water. Older children may take or 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 or shower water.

HOW DO I USE WATER WHEN THE BOIL WATER ADVISORY HAS BEEN ISSUED FOR ALL DOMESTIC PURPOSES?

Can I use the water for drinking purposes?

All types of boil water advisories include drinking water. The water cannot be used for drinking until it is properly sterilized by bringing it to a rolling boil. This includes water used for infant formula and juice, cooking, making ice, washing fruits and vegetables, and brushing teeth.

Can I use the water for handwashing?

Water can be used for handwashing after the following water treatment: Use one part regular household bleach to 1,000 parts water. Mix and let stand for at least 10 minutes prior to use. (Use 5 ml or 1 teaspoon of bleach in 5 litres or 1 gallon of water.)

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 health-care settings for washing hands, or in situations when water is not available. The wet wipes used for cleaning babies during a diaper change are not effective for disinfecting hands and should not be used for this purpose.

Can I take a bath or shower?

Bathing or showering in this water is not recommended.

Is it safe to use my dishwasher?

If your dishwasher has a hot setting, it safely disinfects dishes. If your dishwasher does not have a hot setting, wait until the washing cycle is complete. Then soak dishes for one minute in a 1:1000 solution of regular household bleach. (5 ml or 1 tsp of bleach in 5 litres or 1 gallon of water).

If 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 by soaking dishes for one minute with the 1:1000 bleach solution: (5 ml or 1 tsp of bleach in 5 litres or 1 gallon of water). Let dishes air dry.

How do I disinfect countertops, chopping boards or utensils?

Countertops, chopping boards or utensils should be washed with soap and hot water first, then disinfected with the following bleach solution: one part bleach with 75 parts water (15 ml or 3 teaspoons of regular bleach in one litre of water). Do not reuse or store this solution. Make it fresh daily.

Should I change the way I am doing laundry?

No, continue doing laundry the way you usually do, but wash your hands as described above when finished.

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, and is therefore a possible source of infection.

Does an installed water treatment device make the water safe?

It may not, because of the variable nature of the water source and the large variety of treatment devices available. Water used for drinking purposes should be brought to a rolling boil before it is used. This applies to water used for infant formula and juices, cooking, making ice, washing fruits and vegetables, and brushing teeth.

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

Purge your entire system. Shut off power, drain and refill hot water heaters. Run water softeners through a regeneration cycle. Run cold water faucets for five minutes before using the water. Run drinking fountains for five minutes before using the water. Flush all garden hoses by running cold water through them for five minutes. Remove and clean all screens on taps.

My doctor told me I am immunocompromised - what should I do?

Contact your physician and follow his or her advice.

Drinking Water Fact Sheets

How Do I Know If My Well Water Is Safe from bacterial contamination?

How Do I Test My Well Water for bacterial contamination?

What Do I Do When a Boil Water Advisory is Issued?

How Do I Disinfect My Well?

Guidelines for Food Establishments During a Boil Water Advisory

Where can I get more information?

For further information on well water safety, please contact the nearest office of Manitoba Conservation or The Manitoba Water Services Board at the numbers listed on this fact sheet, or call Health Links at 788-8200 or toll-free 1-888-315-9257.

Manitoba Conservation

Winnipeg 204-945-0675
Fax 204-945-1211

Brandon 204-726-6064
Fax 204-726-6567

Viriden 204-748-2321
Fax 204-748-2388

Steinbach 204-346-6060
Fax 204-326-2472

Selkirk 204-785-5030
Fax 204-785-5024

Lac du Bonnet 204-345-1447
Fax 204-345-1415

Flin Flon 204-687-1625
Fax 204-687-1623

The Pas 204-627-8307
Fax 204-623-1773

Killarney 204-523-5285
Fax 204-523-4626

Dauphin 204-622-2030
Fax 204-622-2306

Swan River 204-734-3436
Fax 204-734-5151

Winkler 204-325-1750
Fax 204-325-1758

Portage
la Prairie 204-239-3188
Fax 204-239-3185

Thompson 204-677-6704
Fax 204-677-6652

The Manitoba Water Services Board

Brandon 204-726-6079
Fax 204-726-6290

Dauphin 204-622-2116
Fax 204-622-2298

Beausejour 204-268-6059
Fax 204-268-6060

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Information Compiled by the Drinking Water Coordinating Group