

# Precautions for all Households during a Drinking Water Advisory

When a Precautionary Drinking Water Advisory (PDWA) or an Emergency Boil Water Order (EBWO) is issued, all water used for drinking purposes, must be brought to a rolling boil for at least one (1) minute prior to use. If you do not wish to boil the water an alternative water source known to be safe should be used, such as bottled water.

Boiled water should be used for other activities where it may be ingested, including:

- brushing teeth or soaking false teeth;
- washing fruits and vegetables;
- food or drink which will not be subsequently heated; and,
- ice cubes. Ice made before the drinking water advisory should be discarded.

Under most circumstances, it is not necessary to boil water used for other household purposes, such as laundry and cleaning.

## Can I use this water for dishwashing?

If the PDWA or EBWO is due to bacterial contamination, dishes can be washed by using water with dish detergent however after washing, completely immerse for at least two minutes in a diluted bleach solution (4 ml of unscented bleach per 1 litre). Allow dishes, cutlery, cups, etc. to completely air dry before use.

If the PDWA or EBWO is known to be due to parasite contamination (e.g. Cryptosporidium, Giardia), use boiled (then cooled) water or water from an alternate safe source to wash with dish detergent and then rinse for a minute in a diluted bleach solution (1 tablespoon of unscented bleach per gallon of water or 4 ml of unscented bleach per 1 litre). Allow dishes, cutlery, cups, etc. to completely air dry before use.

Public health officials will advise the public on which procedure to follow during a specific event. Note: Do not mix bleach with soaps or detergents as this can produce toxic gasses while reducing the effectiveness of the bleach.

## Can I shower or bathe with this water?

- Healthy adults may shower or bathe as long as they are aware not to swallow any tap water.
- Infants, young children and people that have breaks in skin, recent surgical incisions, open wounds or blisters/sores should be sponge bathed with bottled water or an approved water alternative. Children and patients that are not mentally competent should be supervised when bathing to ensure water is not swallowed.

## Can I use appliances directly connected to the water lines?

Refrigerator ice machines and other appliances directly connected to the water lines must not be used while the advisory is in effect. Once the advisory has been lifted these appliances need to be flushed, cleaned and sanitized as per manufacturer's directions.

## Can I make coffee with the water?

If the coffee produced by your coffee maker is at least 72°C for 1 minute while in the pot, the coffee will be bacteriologically safe. However, non-commercial or domestic type coffee brewers produce wide variations of water temperatures.

The temperature of the water should be verified using a metal stem probe thermometer by running a full cycle of the brewer with water, taking the temperature at a point below the funnel when the decanter is half full. The temperature at this point should be 72°C or higher.

The decanter used for filling the brewer with water should not be used for receiving the coffee before being washed and sanitized.

If you are not able to take the temperature of the water, use boiled or bottled water to make coffee.

### **What [microbe, organisms, germs, bacteria] might be in the water?**

Many types of microbes could be in the water. Water systems are concerned about bacteria such as E. coli, viruses such as norovirus, and parasites such as Cryptosporidium.

### **I drank the water, will I get sick?**

The majority of people that drink the water will not become sick. The most common symptoms that you may experience are very similar to a foodborne illness. The symptoms include diarrhea, stomach cramps, and nausea. If you are concerned, consult your health care provider or contact the local health region.

### **What about shaving?**

Yes, you can shave as usual.

### **What about doing laundry?**

Yes, it is safe to do laundry as usual.

### **Should I give my pets boiled water?**

Pets can get some of the same diseases as people. It is a good idea to give them boiled water that has been cooled.

### **Do I need to worry about my fish or aquatic pets (e.g. reptiles, frogs)?**

Most germs that infect people do not infect reptiles or fish. If your water system is using more chlorine or changing disinfection, be cautious about changing the water in your fish tank or aquarium. Contact your local pet store or veterinarian for more advice.

### **Is it safe to water my garden and house plants?**

You can use tap water for household plants and gardens.

### **Who can I contact if I have questions?**

The link below provides the contact information for public health officers throughout the province:

<http://www.health.gov.sk.ca/public-health-inspections>