

FACT SHEET:

How to use Water Safely During a Boil Water Advisory

1. How do I use water when a 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 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 and disinfect the ice cube trays. 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 renders it consumable.

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?

Water can be used for handwashing following the described procedure below:

- a) You can wash your hands using warm tap water and soap, dry hands thoroughly and use an alcohol-based hand disinfectant. The hand sanitizer should contain more than 60% alcohol. The wet wipes used for cleaning babies at diaper changes are not effective for disinfecting hands and should not be used for this purpose.

OR

- b) Bring the water to a rapid rolling boil for one minute and cool it to the temperature that won't burn the skin when used for handwashing.

OR

- c) Add 1.5 oz (about 45 ml) of liquid household bleach in 45 litres of water. Mix and let stand for at least 20 minutes prior to use.

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

If your dishwasher has a hot temperature setting or uses disinfectant, it can sanitize dishes. If your dishwasher does not have a hot temperature setting, make sure after the rinse cycle, you soak the dishes for one minute in a solution of 1 oz (30 ml) of bleach mixed with 13.5 litres of lukewarm water. Let the dishes air-dry.

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 or disinfected after the Boil Water Advisory has been rescinded. Contact your manufacturer or Regional Health Authority 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 ¼ cup (about 60 ml) of bleach into 4.5 litres 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 is acceptable only if the water undergoes acceptable further treatment to remove the contamination. Check with your Regional Health Authority to determine if certain brand of bottled water or vending machine is acceptable. Bottled water packaged or manufactured from out-of-town are acceptable.

12. Can I drink coffee from a coffee maker?

Coffee makers usually produce water at around 70°C, which is sufficient to inactivate bacteria such as *E. coli*, protozoa such as *Cryptosporidium*, and viruses such as Hepatitis A and Norovirus. However, a sufficient amount of time is needed to ensure all harmful organisms are destroyed. It is, therefore, recommended that hot coffee be held for at least five (5) minutes before consumption. Check with your local Regional Health Authority for more information.

For more information, please contact your local health inspector at one of the locations below.

Airdrie Airdrie Public Health Centre 604 Main Street South Airdrie, AB T4B 3K7 Phone: 403-912-8400 Fax: 403-912-8410	Banff Banff Health Centre 303 Lynx Street PO Box 1266 Banff, AB T1L 1B3 Phone: 403-762-2990 Fax: 403-762-5570	Calgary/Mountain View/Rocky View Calgary Health Region, 10101 Southport Rd SW Calgary, AB T2W 3N2 Phone: 403-943-2288 Fax: 403-943-8056	Canmore Canmore Public Health #104, 800 Railway Avenue Canmore, AB T1W 1P1 Phone: 403-678-5656 Fax: 403-678-5068
Claresholm Claresholm Public Health 5221 2 nd Street W PO Box 1391 Claresholm, AB T0L 0T0 Phone: 403-625-4061 Fax: 403-625-4062	Didsbury Didsbury Health Unit PO Bag 130 1210 -20th Avenue Didsbury, AB T0M 0W0 Phone: 403-335-7292 Fax: 403-335-7610	Okotoks Okotoks Public Health Centre 11 Cimarron Commons Okotoks, AB T1S 2E9 Phone: 403-995-2600 Fax: 403-995-2639	Strathmore Public Health Building 650 Westchester Road Strathmore, AB T1P 1H8 Phone: 403-361-7200 Fax: 403-361-7244