

Using Water Safely in Childcare Facilities During a Boil Water Advisory

What is a boil water advisory?

A boil water advisory is issued when harmful germs (e.g., *E.coli* bacteria, *Giardia* parasite) may be in a drinking water supply. Drinking water contaminated with these germs can make people and animals very sick. Boiling will kill the germs and make the water safe to drink after cooling.

What immediate steps must a childcare facility take when a boil water advisory is issued?

- Safe water must be provided for children and staff for drinking purposes.
- Post signs at all entrances and faucets, including the kitchen area and washrooms as a reminder of the boil water advisory and not to drink the water.
- Turn off or disconnect drinking fountains.
- Provide washrooms with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that has at least 60% alcohol content. Inform staff that the hand sanitizer should be used after hands are properly washed and dried.

When a boil water advisory has been issued, how should the water be used?

When a boil water advisory has been issued, **do not** use the tap water to:

- drink
- prepare baby formula
- make juice
- make ice
- prepare foods
- wash fruits or vegetables
- brush teeth
- fill a water play table

During a boil water advisory use boiled water, bottled water or water from another safe public supply not affected by the advisory.

To make the water safe, **bring to a rapid rolling boil for at least one minute**. Boil only as much water in the pot that one can comfortably lift without spilling. Ensure water is cooled appropriately before using or before direct handling to prevent scalds.

What special precautions should people with a weakened immune system take?

If a child has a weakened immune system, have the child's parents consult with a doctor.

Is bottled water or water from self-serve water dispensers safe to use?

Sometimes you can use bottled water, but it depends on when and how the water was bottled. Bottling plants and/or water dispensers that use local water must treat the water to remove harmful germs. Check with the Environmental Public Health Office (phone numbers below) about bottled water brands or water dispensers that have been treated so the water is safe. You can also use water bottled from another public water supply not affected by the advisory.

Is the water safe to drink if an on-site water filtration device is used?

If you have a water filtration device, **do not** use the water during a boil water advisory. Many filtration devices do not remove harmful germs. Check with the manufacturer to find out what the filtration device does remove.

Is there further information on safe food preparation for a public food establishment?

Follow the procedures listed in the document, “Using Water Safely in Food Establishments During a Boil Water Advisory”. This document is available by contacting the local Environmental Health Officer.

GENERAL HYGIENE DURING A BOIL WATER ADVISORY

Can tap water be used for handwashing?

Yes. Wash hands using tap water and soap, making sure to lather and scrub all surfaces of the hand for a minimum of 20 seconds. Rinse hands well with running water, and dry with a paper towel. After washing hands with tap water, **use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer** containing more than 60% alcohol. Ensure that hand sanitizer is provided at each handwashing station, including washrooms, and staff supervise children during sanitizer use.

Can tap water be used for face or hand wiping cloths?

No. Use alternative safe drinking water (bottled or previously boiled and cooled) for wiping faces or hands of infants, toddlers or children. Children’s face wipes can also be used.

Can tap water be used for brushing teeth?

No. During a boil water advisory, **do not** use tap water to brush teeth. Use boiled water that is cooled, bottled water or water from another safe source.

Can tap water be used for washing laundry?

Yes. During a boil water advisory, continue washing laundry like normal. Ensure that a mechanical dryer (hot drying method) is used to completely dry the material.

Can tap water be used for general cleaning purposes?

Yes. Tap water can be used for general cleaning of surfaces and to prepare sanitizing solutions. Cleaned high touch surfaces and toys should be sanitized with one of the approved sanitizers listed below, and allowed to air dry. Sanitizer concentration should be tested regularly with sanitizer test papers or other testing equipment, unless the sanitizer is premixed by the manufacturer and marked with an expiry date.

Approved Sanitizers:

- Chlorine solution: 100 ppm chlorine (1/2 teaspoon household bleach per litre of water).
- Quaternary Ammonia Solution: Generally 200 ppm. Follow manufacturer’s instructions for correct dilution, contact time, and if rinsing is required prior to contact by mouth if used on toys. The product must have a DIN issued by Health Canada.
- Iodine Solution: 12.5-25 ppm iodine. Follow manufacturer’s directions.

- Accelerated Hydrogen Peroxide: 0.5% AHP. Follow manufacturer's instructions for correct dilution, contact time and if rinsing is required prior to contact by mouth if used on toys. The product must have a DIN issued by Health Canada.

Is the water safe to fill water play areas or wading pools for children?

Water table play during a boil water advisory is discouraged. However, the following process will sanitize the water for safe play. Use water that has been previously boiled and cooled, or sanitize the water in a water play table by adding 45 ml (about 1.5 oz) of liquid household bleach to every 45 litres of water. Mix and let stand for at least 20 minutes prior to use.

PROCEDURES TO TAKE AFTER A BOIL WATER ADVISORY IS ENDED

- Flush all water-using fixtures by running the tap for five minutes.
- Ensure equipment with water line connections such as refrigerator water and ice dispensers are drained, flushed, cleaned and disinfected according to the manufacturer's recommendations.
- Flush, drain, clean and disinfect cisterns that contained the affected water source.
- Run water softeners through a regeneration cycle according to manufacturer's recommendations.
- Drain and refill hot water heaters that have been set below 45°C/110°F.

For more information about using water during a boil water advisory, contact the local Environmental Health Officer.

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