

Boil Water Advisory

For All Domestic Water Uses

What to do when you're advised to boil your water for all domestic water uses

Boil water advisories always state that all drinking water and water used to rinse food, make formula and juice, etc. must be boiled. When the risks associated with a water supply are very high (ex: during a waterborne disease outbreak), the advisory may contain additional instructions for bathing, laundry, etc. This type of boil water advisory is extremely rare in Manitoba.

Private well owners should follow these precautions if tests show *E. coli* counts greater than 200 per 100 mL.

For drinking water and preparing food:

Follow the precautions for drinking water and preparing food found in Boil Water Advisory Fact Sheet #2 "For Private Well Owners".

In addition, the following procedures should be followed:

Options for washing hands:

- Wash hands properly, rubbing all parts of the hand with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, followed by an alcohol-based hand disinfectant with over 60 per cent alcohol. Rub hands until dry. *Note: baby wet wipes will not disinfect hands and should not be used for hand cleaning.*

- Rub an alcohol-based hand disinfectant with 65 to 95 per cent alcohol into all parts of the hands until they are dry.
- Use tap water to make a chlorine bleach solution (see instructions for chlorine bleach solution – for hand washing) for washing hands. Pour or spray the chlorine bleach solution over your hands and rub them until dry. Do not towel dry.

Bathing, showering: Avoid using the tap water to bathe or shower. Sponge bathe if necessary. Do not swallow water or allow it to get into cuts or open wounds.

Washing dishes (automatic dishwashers): Dishwashers that use hot water and have a drying cycle will disinfect the dishes. Otherwise, you should disinfect the dishes with a sanitizing solution (see instructions for sanitizing solution – for dishes and counters) after the wash cycle, then let them air dry.

Washing dishes (by hand): You can use hot tap water and soap to hand wash dishes, but you must rinse them in a sanitizing solution (see instructions for sanitizing solution - for dishes and counters) for one minute. Then let them air dry for at least four hours.

Washing countertops, cutting boards and utensils: Wash countertops, cutting boards and utensils with hot tap water and soap. Disinfect them with a sanitizing solution (see instructions for sanitizing solution - for dishes and counters). Then let them air dry.

Doing laundry: You can use tap water for laundry, but you should wash your hands after you lift the wet laundry from the washer to the dryer.

Flushing toilets, watering lawns: You can use tap water for these purposes.

When a boil water advisory is lifted

When your water supply is safe again, the boil water advisory will be lifted and you will get a public notice stating you can use the tap water as usual, after completing the following steps:

- Flush out your household water pipes to ensure they contain safe water before using them. To do this, turn on one hot water tap and let it run until the water is cold. This will drain the hot water heater and refill it with safe water.
- Then, turn on all your cold water taps, faucets, fountains, showerheads and outside hose spigots and let them run for five minutes.
- Remove and clean all screens on taps and faucets.
- Run water softeners through a regeneration cycle.
- Replace any water filter cartridges in water treatment devices and follow the maintenance instructions in the owner's manual.

Note: Private well owners should only use well water after a water test confirms it is safe to drink again.

Instructions for chlorine bleach solution – for hand washing:

Mix:

- 5 millilitres (1 teaspoon) of unscented household bleach (detergent-free)

With:

- 4 litres (1 gallon) of boiled water or commercial bottled water from a safe water source

Let the solution stand for at least 10 minutes and store in small clean containers. Clean plastic or glass bottles with hand pumps work well.

Instructions for sanitizing solution – for dishes and counters:

Mix:

- 10 millilitres (2 teaspoons) of unscented household bleach (detergent-free)

With:

- 4 litres (1 gallon) of boiled water or commercial bottled water from a safe water source

Let the solution stand for at least 10 minutes and store in small clean containers. Clean plastic or glass bottles with hand pumps work well.

NOTE:

- **Label all containers: “Bleach/chlorine -- do not drink.”**
- **Make the solutions fresh every day – don't store them overnight.**

For more information

For more information on drinking water safety, water treatment devices or to receive a copy of other drinking water fact sheets, please visit the Office of Drinking Water website at www.manitoba.ca/drinkingwater or contact the Private Well, Education and Outreach Co-ordinator at 204-948-1351. To locate a local office near you, please refer to the website at www.manitoba.ca/waterstewardship/odw/reg-contacts/index.html.

For information on certification for water treatment devices, visit www.nsf.org.

For information on well driller reports, well construction or sealing of unused wells, contact Manitoba Conservation and Water Stewardship, Groundwater Management Section at 204-945-6959.

For health information, contact Health Links at 204-788-8200 in Winnipeg; toll free at 1-888-315-9257 or contact your local public health office. To find your nearest office, go to: www.manitoba.ca/health/publichealth/offices.html.