

Fact Sheet About What to Do During a Boil Water Advisory

During a boil water advisory, bottled water is the best option until officials say otherwise. If you do not have bottled water available, the next best option is to boil your tap water to make it safe to drink. If boiling your tap water is not possible, you can disinfect it to make it safe to drink.

Boiling water

To boil water

- Fill a pot with water.
- Heat the water until bubbles come quickly from the bottom of the pot to the top.
- Keep heating the water for one more minute.
- Turn off the heat source and let the water cool.
- Pour the water into a clean container with a cover for storage.

Disinfecting water

If you are unable to boil your water, you can disinfect it to make it safe to drink.

You will need a clean, sanitized container to store any water you disinfect. We recommend you clean and sanitize your container before you disinfect your water by following these steps:

1. Wash the storage container with dishwashing soap and water and rinse completely.
2. Sanitize the container with a solution made by mixing 1 teaspoon of unscented household bleach (bleach that does not have an added scent) in one quart (32 ounces, 4 cups, or about 1 liter) of water.
3. Cover the container and shake it well so that the sanitizing bleach solution touches all inside surfaces of the container.
4. Wait at least 30 seconds and then pour the sanitizing solution out of the container.
5. Let the empty sanitized container air-dry before use OR rinse the empty container with clean, safe water that is available already.

Note: When preparing safe water, it is best to use food grade water storage containers, such as those found at surplus or camping supply stores. If you are not able to use a food grade water storage container, be sure the container you choose:

- Has a top that can be closed tightly
- Is made of durable, unbreakable materials (i.e. not glass)

DO NOT USE containers that previously have been used to hold liquid or solid toxic chemicals (bleach, pesticides, etc.)

To disinfect your tap water

If the tap water is clear:

- Use unscented bleach (bleach that does not have an added scent). The label should say that it contains 5-9% of sodium hypochlorite.

- Add 8 drops (using a medicine dropper) or 0.5 milliliters of bleach to 1 gallon (16 cups) of water.
- Mix well and wait 30 minutes or more before drinking.
- Store disinfected water in a clean, sanitized container with a cover.

If the tap water is cloudy:

- Filter water using clean cloth.
- Use unscented bleach (bleach that does not have an added scent). The label should say that it contains 5-9% of sodium hypochlorite.
- Add 16 drops, 1 milliliter, or 1/8 teaspoon of bleach to 1 gallon (16 cups) of water.
- Mix well and wait 30 minutes or more before drinking.
- Store disinfected water in a clean, sanitized container with a cover.

Water Filters

You should boil your tap water even if it is filtered. Most kitchen and other household water filters do not remove bacteria or viruses.

Filters collect germs from water, so all water filters should be replaced after the advisory has been lifted. Anyone changing the cartridges should wear gloves and wash hands afterwards. Flush water through the filter for [X] minutes and then replace the removable part of the filter unit as needed.

Preparing and Cooking Food

Use bottled water or boiled water that has cooled to:

- Wash all fruits and vegetables
- Cook food
- Prepare drinks, such as coffee, tea, and lemonade
- Wash food preparation surfaces

Feeding Babies and Using Formula

Breastfeeding is best. Continue to breastfeed. If breastfeeding is not an option:

- Use ready-to-use baby formula, if possible.
- Prepare powdered or concentrated baby formula with bottled water. Use boiled water if you do not have bottled water.
- Wash and sterilize bottles and nipples before use using bottled or boiled water that has cooled.
- If you cannot sterilize bottles, try to use single-serve, ready-to-feed bottles.

Ice

- Do not use ice from ice trays, ice dispensers, or ice makers.
- Throw out all ice made with tap water.
- Make new ice with bottled or boiled water.

Handwashing

In many situations, you can use tap water and soap to wash your hands. Follow the guidance of your local public health officials or emergency managers. Be sure to scrub your hands with soap and water (warm or cold) for 20 seconds and rinse them well under running water. It is important to dry hands completely with a towel or by letting them air dry.

Bathing and Showering

Be careful not to swallow any water when bathing or showering.

Use caution when bathing babies and young children. Consider giving them a sponge bath to reduce the chance of them swallowing water.

Brushing Teeth

Brush teeth with bottled or boiled water that has cooled.

Washing Dishes

Use disposable plates, cups, and utensils, if possible. If you do not have disposable dishes, follow the instructions below.

Household dishwashers generally are safe to use if the water reaches a final rinse temperature of at least 150 degrees or if the dishwasher has a sanitizing cycle.

To wash dishes by hand:

- Wash and rinse the dishes as you normally would using hot water.
- In a separate basin, add 1 teaspoon of unscented household liquid bleach for each gallon of warm water.
- Soak the rinsed dishes in the water for at least one minute.
- Let the dishes air dry completely before using again.

Laundry

It is safe to do laundry as usual.

Pets

Pets can get sick from the same germs as people. It is a good idea to give them bottled water or boiled water that has been cooled for drinking.

For more information, see or contact:

- [Creating & Storing an Emergency Water Supply](#): CDC provides guidance on the amount of water needed for good health, as well as how to prepare and store safe water before and during an emergency.
- [Hygiene, Handwashing, & Diapering](#): CDC provides guidance on recommended hygienic practices when water is not available or is contaminated.
- [A Guide to Water Filters](#): CDC maintains a guide for choosing filters that remove pathogens, chemicals, or toxins.
- EPA Safe Drinking Water Hotline: 1-800-426-4791
- [Ground Water and Drinking Water](#): EPA provides information and guidance about drinking water quality, emergencies, contaminants, public health issues, and treatment and storage.