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What to Do During a Boil Water Notice

The following general precautions should be followed when there is a boil water notice in effect.

Please note that precautions may vary depending on the circumstances of the notice.

Boiled water is required for:

Drinking purposes

This includes all beverage concentrates or powders where water is added, such as fruit juices, iced tea, and instant coffee.

Food preparation

This includes washing fruits and vegetables that will not be cooked.

Note: Water used as an ingredient does not need to be boiled prior to use providing it will be brought to a boil during the cooking process.

Brushing teeth

This includes daily oral hygiene including cleaning dentures.

Infant formulas

Formulas should always be prepared by using boiled tap water or bottled water.

Making ice

It is important to note that freezing does not destroy most pathogens. Bacteria and viruses can survive in frozen products for long periods of time. Discard any ice made from contaminated or potentially contaminated water and only use ice from a source not affected by the advisory.

Fruit and vegetable washing

Boiled water should be used to wash all produce that is to be eaten raw.

Home canning

To be safe postpone home canning until the boil water notice has been rescinded.

Beer and wine making

To be safe postpone beer and wine making until the boil water notice has been rescinded.

Water for pets

Some veterinarians recommend that drinking water for pets including dogs, cats, birds and reptiles be boiled. Information on water quality for livestock can be accessed at the [BC Ministry of Environment water quality objectives](#) website.

Immune-Compromised Individuals

People who are immune-compromised should always boil their tap water for the purposes above.

The following uses do not require boiled water but require additional cleaners or sanitizers:

Cleaning food contact surfaces

Food contact surfaces are all those surfaces that food comes into contact with during the food preparation process. These include counter tops, cutting boards and chopping blocks. Food contact surfaces should be washed with clean, hot water and then sanitized using an acceptable sanitizing agent. Sanitizing agents for food contact surfaces include regular unscented household bleach (5%), iodophors, and quaternary ammonia compounds (QUATS). More information regarding sanitizers can be found in the Canadian Food Retail and Food Services Code which is available online.

To prepare stock bleach solution, add 2-4 ml of 5.25% bleach per liter of water (1/2 teaspoon per liter, or approximately one half-cap full). This will make a 100 to 200 ppm chlorine solution.

Hand washing

Using warm water and soap should be sufficient.

Dishwashing by hand

Use warm water (approximately 45°C) to wash and rinse dishes. Next, make a bleach/water solution in a separate sink, add 2-4 ml of bleach per liter of water (or 1/2 teaspoon per liter) and immerse dishes for two minutes. Dishes should then be left to **air dry** prior to being used. Attempting to wash and sanitize dishes in the same sink at the same time is not recommended because soap, grease and food particles interfere with the sanitizing process.

Mechanical dishwashers

Residential home-style dishwashers may not provide a high enough temperature to destroy all pathogens. Dishwashing units that reach 82 degrees Celsius (180 degrees Fahrenheit) for twelve seconds (or an equivalent time-temperature relationship) during the final rinse cycle will destroy pathogens. Consult your dishwasher owner's manual to verify these specifications.

To optimize dishwasher disinfection, consider the following:

- Using the highest temperature setting possible. This is often a "sani" cycle on most residential dishwashers; and
- Allow the dishwasher to complete its full cycle.

All other water should be boiled. Simply put, any water that has a chance of being ingested should be boiled.

How to boil tap water

Tap water should be boiled for **one minute**. Use any clean pot or kettle. Kettles that have automatic shut offs are acceptable.

After boiling, let the water cool by leaving it on the counter or in the refrigerator in covered containers. After water is boiled it can be stored in food grade containers at room temperature or in the refrigerator.

Boiled water tends to have a flat taste. You can bring back flavour by shaking water in a container, pouring the water between two containers, and/or adding a pinch of salt.

When will the Boil Water Notice be lifted?

The Boil Water Notice will be lifted once the water is safe to drink.

After a Boil Water Notice has been lifted:

- Flush all water-using fixtures for 1 minute.
- Run cold-water faucets and drinking fountains for 3 minutes before using the water.
- Drain and flush all ice-making machines in your refrigerator.
- Run water softeners through a regeneration cycle.
- Drain and refill hot water tanks if set below 45°C (normal setting is 60°C).
- Change any pre-treatment filters (under sink style and refrigerator water filters, carbon block, activated carbon, sediment filters, etc).

Alternatives to Boiling Water

Although there are alternatives, not all of them will be feasible or practical in all situations. In part, it will depend on how much water you need and what you need it for. Safe alternatives to boiling water include:

- Using commercially prepared bottled water.
- Obtaining water from an approved source that is not on a boil water notice.

If you have any further questions regarding a Boil Water Notice in your area, please contact your local Health Unit or Drinking Water Officer for more information.

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