

BOIL WATER ADVISORY FAQS



How do I boil my water during an advisory?

- Fill a pot with water.
- Heat the water until bubbles come from the bottom of the pot to the top.
- Once the water reaches a rolling boil, let it boil for 1 minute.
- Turn off the heat source and let the water cool.
- Pour water into a clean container with a cover for storage

Why do I have to boil my water?

If you have received a Boil Water Advisory notice, your water may be contaminated by potentially harmful bacteria resulting from loss of water pressure in the distribution system due to a damaged water line or water system mechanical issue in your area. If these bacteria are present, they could make you sick, and are a particular concern for people with weakened immune systems. The affected area is limited, but if you have received a notice directly from your water provider, you are in the affected area. The Boil Water Advisory gives you information so you can take action to protect your health.

What might be in the water?

Many types of microbes could be in the water. Water systems are concerned about bacteria (*E. coli*), viruses (norovirus), and parasites (*Cryptosporidium*).

Human illness from these microbes is usually caused by eating raw or undercooked food, recreational or other untreated water, or poor hand-washing. Diarrheal illness from these microbes is not usually life threatening, except in the elderly, the very young, or those with weak immune systems. If you are concerned, consult your health care provider or contact Oregon Health Authority, Drinking Water Services at 971-673-0405.

What if I have already consumed water before receiving the boil water notice?

If you have already consumed water before a boil water notice was issued, do not panic; boil water notices are issued as a precaution rather than a confirmed contamination event. The likelihood of becoming ill is low, but illness is possible if contamination is present, especially for people that have a chronic illness or may be immune-compromised.

If you experience symptoms of gastroenteritis, such as diarrhea, nausea, vomiting, abdominal cramps, with or without fever, seek medical attention. Note that these symptoms are not unique to exposure to potential contaminants in the water, and a doctor's involvement is key to identifying the cause of your illness.

Should I use bottled water?

You may choose to use bottled water if it is available.

I don't like the taste of boiled water. What can I do?

To improve the taste you can:

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- Pour cooled water back and forth from one clean glass into another to add air to the water.
- Let the water stand for a few hours.
- Add a pinch of salt to each quart of boiled water.

Food and Beverages

Can I use my coffee maker, ice machine, or water or soda dispenser?

Do not use water from any appliance connected to your water lines. This includes water and ice dispensers in your refrigerator/freezer.

- Use boiled or bottled water to make coffee and ice.
- Filters do not remove or kill bacteria or viruses.
- When the boil water advisory is lifted, consult the owner's manual and sanitize appliances.

What about 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 boiled or bottled water.

What should I do about preparing food and beverages? How should I wash fruit, vegetables, and food preparation surfaces?

- Wash fruits and vegetables with cooled, boiled water or bottled water.
- Bring water to a rolling boil for one minute before adding food to cook.
- Use boiled water when preparing drinks, such as coffee, tea, and lemonade.
- Wash food preparation surfaces with boiled water.

What should I do about feeding my baby?

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

- Use ready-to-use formula, if possible.
- Prepare powdered or concentrated formula with bottled water. Use boiled water if you do not have bottled water. Disinfect water for formula if you cannot boil your water (see above for directions on how to use bleach to disinfect water).
- Wash and sterilize bottles and nipples before use.
- If you cannot sterilize bottles, try to use single-serve, ready-to-feed bottles.

How do I wash dishes during a Boil Water Advisory?

Dishwashers are safe to use if the water reaches a temperature of at least 160°F or if the dishwasher has a sanitizing cycle.

To wash dishes by hand:

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

Household Information

Should I give my pets boiled water?

Pets can get some of the same diseases as people. It is a good idea to give them boiled water that has been cooled.

Do I need to worry about my fish or aquatic pets (e.g., reptiles, frogs)?

Most germs that infect people do not infect reptiles or fish. If your water system is using more chlorine or changing disinfection, be cautious about changing the water in your fish tank or aquarium. Contact your local pet store or veterinarian for more advice.

Is it safe to water my garden and house plants?

You can use tap water for household plants and gardens.

Hygiene

Can I use tap water to brush my teeth?

No. Do not use tap water to brush your teeth. Use boiled or bottled water.

Is it safe to take a shower or bath?

Yes, it is safe to take a bath or shower, but be careful not to swallow any water. Use caution when bathing infants and young children. Consider giving them a sponge bath to reduce the chance of them swallowing water.

What about shaving?

Yes, you can shave as usual.

Where can I get more information?

[Personal Water Use](#): CDC provides guidance on the amount of water needed for good health, as well as its preparation and storage in preparation for and during an emergency.

[Hygiene and Sanitation](#): CDC provides guidance on alternative hygienic practices when water is not available or is contaminated.

[A Guide to Water Filters](#): CDC maintains a guide for filters that remove *Cryptosporidium* or *Giardia*.

EPA Safe Drinking Water Hotline: 1-800-426-4791

[EPA Consumer Information Page](#)



Frequently Asked Questions About What to Do After a Boil Water Advisory

When I turn on the faucet, the water sputters. Why?

You have air in your lines. Turn on your tap slowly and run the water until the sputtering stops.

The water is discolored. What should I do?

Flush water pipes by running the water until it is clear.

Do not wash clothes if the water is discolored. Wait until the water runs clear at the tap. Wash a load of dark clothes first.

Why does my water have a strong smell?

The smell is probably chlorine. Often, water systems will increase chlorine levels to disinfect the pipes.

What should I do if my water pressure is low?

Check the faucet screens for trapped particles. Remove the screens and clean out any particles. Put the screens back on the faucet.

Do I need to clean out my faucets?

Yes. Flush faucets you did not use during the drinking water advisory.

- Turn the water on.
- Turn on the cold water tap at all faucets used for drinking water in the home and run the water until you feel a change in temperature (i.e. the water gets noticeably colder). This may take a few minutes.

My refrigerator has a water dispenser/ice maker. Do I need to clean them?

Yes. Water dispensers and ice makers are connected to your water line. You need to sanitize them. Follow the directions in the owner's manual or:

- Change the filter cartridges.
- Throw out ice.
- Flush the water dispenser for 3 to 5 minutes.
- Run the ice maker for 1 hour.
- Throw out ice.
- Wash and sanitize bin areas.

Do I need to do something for the water softener?

Yes. You may need to run through a regeneration cycle. Refer to the owner's manual.

I have a water treatment unit for the house. Does it need special care?

Yes. Change the filter cartridges. Some units need disinfecting. Check the unit's owner's manual.