



Safety Procedures for Water Supply Bacterial Contamination

Recommendations

Residence Owners

Water Supply Bacterial Contamination

In a situation in which the drinking water in a residence is found to contain unacceptably high levels of bacteria, the residence owner is advised to follow the following recommendations:

1. Drinking Water and Food Preparation

- Bring all drinking water to a rolling boil for two minutes. Boil all water used for washing fruits or raw vegetables, ice cubes, brushing teeth, preparing formula, making juices, or preparing tea or coffee.
- Use boiled water for cooking all foods that will not be heated to boiling temperature (100°C/212°F) for at least two minutes.

Bottled water is acceptable and can be used instead of boiled water.

- DO NOT rely on automatic shut-off kettles because they do not boil water long enough to be safe.
- DO NOT use point-of-use treatment filter devices that fit onto taps (these include water softeners, reverse osmosis devices or sediment/charcoal filter devices) as they may not eliminate bacteria.

2. Bathing

Showering and tub bathing is allowable if you are sure the person's skin is intact and that they will NOT consume the water. Showering and tub bathing are NOT allowable if the person is immunocompromised.

Where conditions are such that individuals may be at risk of swallowing bath water, tub bathing using disinfected water is recommended. To disinfect water for bathing, add 1 oz./30 mL of 5.25 % household bleach to an average size bathtub half filled with water. Mix well and let stand for 15 minutes before bathing. Larger-sized tubs, such as jacuzzi tubs, will require more disinfectant. In extreme circumstances, sponge bathing with boiled or bottled water may be necessary.

3. Handwashing

As we all know, handwashing is always very important after using the washroom and before preparing or handling food – but what if the water is contaminated?

Hands may be washed with boiled/bottled water. It would also be acceptable to wash hands with tap water as usual, provided one of the following additional steps is followed:

- Thoroughly wipe hands with an alcohol-based antiseptic wipe;
- Apply a liquid hand sanitizer (available at most department/drug stores) to hands; or
- Immerse hands in water disinfected with 5.25% liquid bleach (1tsp./1L water) for a few seconds.
- Please NOTE that if water is grossly contaminated, do NOT wash your hands with the tap water before using one of the options identified above.

4. Humidifiers

These recommendations refer to portable humidifiers ONLY.

- A disinfectant should be added to these humidifiers as per the directions of the manufacturer. If disinfectant cannot be added at the recommended strength, the humidifier should be turned off until the water supply is clear of bacteria.
- For buildings with mechanical ventilation systems, it is recommended that the humidity control portion of the system be turned off until the bacterial contamination problem has been rectified.

5. Dishwashing

- Dishes may be safely washed in hot water and dish detergent. Once dishes are washed, fully rinse and then treat the dishes by soaking for a minimum of two minutes in a solution of 1 oz./30 mL liquid household bleach to three gallons/14 litres, or an average sink full, of water.
- For domestic mechanical dishwashers, add 1 oz./30 mL of liquid household bleach (5.25%) to the final rinse cycle.

Department Information

Department of Environment, Energy and Climate Action – Water & Wastewater Management

Telephone:902.368.5044

Website:www.princeedwardisland.ca/drinkingwaterquality