

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT BOIL WATER NOTICES

I have already drank the water. Will I get sick?

Most people who happen to drink this water will not get sick. Babies, young children, the elderly and people who have compromised immune systems are more of risk of illness. If you get diarrhoea, vomiting and/or a fever, contact Healthline (0800 611 116) or your doctor.

How do I use water when a boil water advisory has been issued?

The water (hot and cold) must NOT be used for drinking, making up baby formula and juices, cooking, making ice, washing fruits and vegetables, or brushing teeth. For these purposes use either boiled water or bottled water. Hot water from your tap is not safe to use during a boil water advisory as the temperature of your hot water cylinder is not high enough to kill germs.

How do I boil the water?

Boiling will kill all disease-causing organisms. Place the water in a clean metal pan and bring to a rolling boil for one minute. Electric jugs with a cut-off switch can be used as long as they are full - allow the water to come to the boil and switch off. Do not hold the switch down to increase the boiling time. Boiled water should be covered and allowed to cool in the same container. The taste will improve if allowed to stand for a few hours before use.

Can I use the water for handwashing?

Thorough handwashing using tap water and soap followed by thorough drying is sufficient. Other options include using an alcohol-based hand sanitiser containing at least 60% alcohol.

Wet wipes used for cleaning babies are not effective for disinfecting hands but are useful for cleaning dirty areas first.

Can I take a bath or shower?

Adults, teens and older children may shower or bathe with untreated water as long as no water is swallowed (avoid the face). Young children should be sponge-bathed instead of bathing in a tub because they are likely to swallow the bath water. If you have recent surgical wounds or a chronic illness, you may want to use bottled or boiled water for bathing until the advisory is lifted.

What about teeth brushing and shaving?

Only use boiled or bottled water for brushing your teeth. You can shave as usual using tap water.

How do I prepare food and drinks?

Fruits and vegetables should be washed using cooled, boiled water. Use boiled water if adding to foods that will not be cooked. Tap water can only be used in foods that subsequently receive thorough cooking.

Do not use ice, food or drinks that may have been made from contaminated tap water.



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What should I do about feeding my baby?

If breastfeeding, continue as usual. If you are using baby formula, prepare using bottled or cooled, boiled water. Wash and sterilise bottles and teats by boiling or microwaving.

I have a water filtration unit installed. Does this make the water safe?

No. Filtered water should also be boiled for one minute before using it for drinking, food preparation or teeth brushing.

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

Coffee machines, ice makers and soda dispensers that are connected to the water supply should not be used. Use bottled water or water that has been boiled or disinfected for making coffee, ice or soda drinks.

I wash dishes by hand. How do I disinfect them?

Dishes can be washed using boiled water. If you use tap water, dishes washed with water and detergent should be rinsed in a bleach solution afterwards (1/2 teaspoon unscented household bleach per 10 litres of water). Allow dishes to completely air dry.

I have a dishwasher. Is it safe to use?

If your dishwasher has a hot setting, it can be used to wash dishes. If your dishwasher does not have a hot setting, after finishing cycle, rinse the dishes in sterilised water afterwards (1/2 teaspoon unscented household bleach per 10 litres of water). Allow dishes to completely air dry.

Should I change the way I am doing my laundry?

No, continue doing your laundry the way you usually do.

What about my pets or livestock?

Pets and livestock can usually drink untreated water.

What should I do after the boil water advisory is lifted?

Run all your cold taps for a few minutes before using the water. Flush any appliances, e.g. coffee machines, that are connected to the water supply. Hot water cylinders and header tanks may need to be drained and refilled. You may notice a strong chlorine smell in the water as it runs through. The council will increase chlorine levels for some time to disinfect the pipework.

Is it ok to leave my toilet unflushed?

- It's okay to leave your toilet unflushed for 24 hours.
- If it's getting full, find undrinkable water to pour into the bowl to flush it out – used dishwasher, rainwater, paddling pool water, etc.
- If you have access to a camp toilet, take advantage of it.
- If you are traveling to an area not affected by the water shortage, use the toilet there.
- It is important to keep flies away so keep the lid down when not in use and use fly spray if necessary.

Keep listening to your radio or go to the New Plymouth District Council or Taranaki District Health Board website for instructions, information and advice:

www.newplymouthnz.com

www.tdhb.org.nz