

# Frequently Asked Questions About Boil Water Advisories



If your local health officials issue a **boil water advisory**, you should use bottled water or boil tap water. This is because a boil water advisory means your community's water has, or could have, germs that can make you sick.

Advisories may include information about preparing food, drinks, or ice; dishwashing; and hygiene, such as brushing teeth and bathing. Boil water advisories usually include this advice:

- Use bottled or [boiled water](#) for drinking, and to prepare and cook food.
- If bottled water is not available, bring **water to a full rolling boil for 1 minute** (at elevations above 6,500 feet, boil for 3 minutes). After boiling, allow the water to cool before use.
- Boil tap water even if it is filtered (for example, by a home water filter or a pitcher that filters water).
- Do not use water from any appliance connected to your water line, such as ice and water from a refrigerator.
- Breastfeeding is the best [infant feeding option](#). If you formula feed your child, provide ready-to-use formula, if possible.

## Handwashing

- In many cases, you can use tap water and soap to [wash hands](#) during a boil water advisory. Follow the guidance from your local public health officials.
- Be sure to scrub your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Then, rinse them well under running water.
- If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.

## 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 boiled or bottled water. Do not use tap water that you have not boiled first.

## Washing dishes

- If possible, use disposable plates, cups, and utensils during a boil water advisory.
- Household dishwashers generally are safe to use if:
  - The water reaches a final rinse temperature of at least 150 degrees Fahrenheit (66°Celsius), or
  - The dishwasher has a sanitizing cycle.
- [Sanitize](#) all baby bottles.
- 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 wash clothes as usual.

## Cleaning

- Clean washable toys and surfaces with:
  - Bottled water,
  - Boiled water, or
  - Water that has been disinfected with [bleach \[PDF – 1 page\]](#).

## Caring for your garden and houseplants

- You can use tap water for household plants and gardens.

## Caring for pets

- Pets can get sick from some of the same germs as people or spread germs to people. Give pets bottled water or [boiled water](#) that has cooled.
- If bottled water is not available, bring **water to a full rolling boil for 1 minute** (at elevations above 6,500 feet, boil for 3 minutes). After boiling, allow the water to cool before use.
- Boil tap water even if it is filtered (for example, by a home water filter or a pitcher that filters water).
- Do not use water from any appliance connected to your water line, such as ice and water from a refrigerator.

## More Information

- [Do Not Drink Water Advisory](#)
- [Do Not Use Water Advisory](#)
- [EPA – Drinking Water in Your Home](#)