



Bacteria in Drinking Water: Public Health Advice

Public water facilities sometimes have elevated bacteria or chlorine in their treated water systems and precautions need to be taken by customers served from these systems. This fact sheet provides information for residents on how to protect their health during a notice.

EMERGENCY CHLORINATION NOTICE

An Emergency Chlorination Notice means that at this point your water is safe, but as a precautionary measure, any ice and premixed beverages (i.e. juice, lemonade, formula, etc.) made prior to the notice being issued, should be discarded.

BOIL WATER NOTICE

Elderly people, small children (including infants), and individuals who have poor immune systems due to illness may be at highest risk during a boil water/bottled water notice. If you or anyone you care for has a poor immune system, consult with your health care provider for additional advice.

Health effects associated with bacteria in water

Bacteria in drinking water may cause illness. Typical symptoms may include diarrhea, cramps, nausea, or yellowing of eyes and skin (jaundice) with headaches or fatigue. Note that these symptoms may be caused by factors other than unsafe water. If you become ill with the above symptoms during a boil water notice, you should talk to your doctor or call your local health department.

Use only SAFE water until “All Clear” notice is given

Examples of safe water include:

- ◆ Commercially bottled water.
- ◆ Packaged ice from an approved source.
- ◆ Water that has been at a rolling boil for 1 minute (*source - CDC- Centers for Disease Control*).
- ◆ Another public water supply system that is safe. Any transport container, whether it is a bucket or gallon jug, must be washed and sanitized before filling with safe, clean water. *Sanitize by immersing for 1 minute in a solution of 1 teaspoon of chlorine bleach (5.25%, unscented) per gallon of clean water.*
- ◆ Clear water to which 1/8 teaspoon (or cloudy water to which 1/4 teaspoon) of bleach has been added to a gallon of water and the water has been allowed to sit for 30 minutes (*source - CDC*).

Use only SAFE water for the following purposes:

- ✓ Drinking, cooking, making baby formula, coffee, juices, other beverages or ice.
- ✓ Washing ready to eat fruits and vegetables
- ✓ Bathing infants, washing open wounds, brushing teeth, or watering pets.
- ✓ Rinsing dishes; see sanitizing instructions above, and allow dishes to air dry.
- ✓ DO NOT use ice cubes from your freezer or any beverages made with unsafe water.

While under the advisory, you may use your current water for the following:

- ✓ Bathing (except infants), showering, washing hands, and washing dishes. Rinse dishes as instructed above.
- ✓ Washing dishes in automatic dishwashers that use a heating element to dry dishes.
- ✓ Washing cars and watering lawns.

For more information about safe drinking water, contact

Wisconsin DNR, Regional Drinking Water Office or <http://www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/water/dwg/>
Your local Public Health Department <http://dhs.wisconsin.gov/localhealth>

Wisconsin Department of Health Services
Division of Public Health
Bureau of Environmental and Occupational Health
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