

*York Region Health Services is mandated to promote safe water practices. This fact sheet is part of a series to provide information and standards on this topic.*

## EMERGENCY WATER TREATMENT

Water from a source that has not been tested for bacteriological quality should NOT be used for drinking, food preparation, *making infant formula and juices*, cooking, making ice, washing fruits, vegetables or brushing teeth. For these purposes, boiled water, bottled water or chlorinated water should be used. *See Safe Water Fact Sheet #3 - Private Well Water Sampling Procedure.*

### **Boil It**

The water should be brought to a rapid rolling boil and boiled for 1 minute. Discard all ice made previously and disinfect the ice cube trays. *Make ice using boiled, cooled water.*

Note: Chemicals already present in the water will become more concentrated with boiling.

### **Chlorinate It**

Add 1.2 5ml (1/4 teaspoon) of unscented liquid household bleach ( such as Javex) to 4 litres (1 gallon) of water. Mix well and allow to stand for a minimum of 15 minutes.

## **Other Water Use:**

### **Bathing/Showering**

Adults and teens may shower with untreated water as long as no water is swallowed. Older children could also be given a shower with a hand held showerhead, avoiding the face. Younger children should be sponge-bathed instead of bathing in a tub because they are likely to swallow tub water. For brushing teeth, use bottled or boiled water.

### **Handwashing**

If you have to boil your water as a precaution due to a boil water advisory and there is no known outbreak of human illness then there is no need for additional hand disinfection with bleach or alcohol solution. If you choose to use an alcohol-based hand disinfectant make sure it contains more than 60% alcohol. Alcohol based disinfectants are widely used in the health care setting after washing hands or in situations when water is not available.

### **Cleaning and disinfecting**

Toys should be cleaned and disinfected. If the toys are visibly soiled, wash them first with soap and water and then disinfect with a freshly prepared bleach solution (1/4 cup (about 60 ml) bleach in to 1 gallon (4.5 litres) of water). Dip toys in to this solution and air-dry them. Cloth and plush toys could be washed or dry-cleaned.

Countertops, chopping boards or utensils which have come into contact with raw meat should be washed with soap and hot water first, then disinfected with a bleach solution stronger than that used for emergency hand disinfection. Mix 1/4 cup (about 60 ml) bleach in to 1 gallon (4.5 litres) water for this purpose. Do not reuse or store this solution, but make it fresh daily.



### **Dishwashing**

If your dishwasher has a hot setting, it safely disinfects dishes. If your dishwasher does not have a hot setting, after finishing the cycle, soak dishes for 1 minute in a solution of 1 oz (30 ml) of bleach mixed with 3 gallons of lukewarm water (13.5 litres). Let dishes air dry. If you wash dishes by hand, you could use boiled water for washing dishes. Dishes washed in soap and hot water can also be rinsed in boiled water or disinfected with the following bleach solution. Mix 1 oz. (about 30 ml) bleach in to 3 gallons (13.5 litres) of water at room temperature for at least 1 minute. Let dishes air dry.

### **Laundry**

Continue doing laundry the way you usually do. If you have to launder sheets heavily soiled with faeces, carefully remove soil before you place the sheets into the washer, without much agitation of the cloth. Use rubber gloves when handling heavily soiled sheets.

### **Wading pools**

The water is not safe to use in wading pools. Water usually gets into the mouths of small children, providing a possibility for infection.

### **Other Water Treatment**

Filtered water should also be brought to a rolling boil for 1 minute before drinking or using it for cooking.

**A Public Health Inspector is available to answer questions Monday to Friday  
8:30am to 4:30pm toll-free at: 1-877-464-9675 ext. 4599.**

Information Sources: Ontario Ministry of Health and Long Term Care, Health Canada

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Other York Region Health Service Fact Sheets Available:

Safe Water Fact Sheet #1: Well Disinfection

Safe Water Fact Sheet #2: Emergency Water Treatment

Safe Water Fact Sheet #3: Private Well Water Sampling Procedure

Safe Water Fact Sheet #4: Interpreting Your Well Water Results

Safe Water Fact Sheet #5: Sodium in Drinking Water

Safe Water Fact Sheet #6: Public Health Concerns When Dealing With a Water Shortage

Safe Water Fact Sheet #6: Nitrate in Drinking Water