

York Region Community and 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 or 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**

Water should be brought to a rolling boil for one 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 1.25ml (1/4 teaspoon) of unscented liquid household bleach (such as Javex) to 4.5 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. For brushing teeth, use bottled or boiled water.

### **Handwashing**

If you have to boil your water and there is no known outbreak of human illness, 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 one gallon (4.5 litres) of water). Dip toys into this solution and air-dry them. Cloth and plush toys should be washed or dry-cleaned.

Countertops, chopping boards or utensils which have come into contact with raw meat must be washed with soap and hot water first, and then disinfected with a bleach solution stronger than that used for emergency hand disinfection. Mix 60 ml (approx. 1/4 cup) of bleach in 4.5 litres (1 gallon) of water for this purpose. Do not reuse or store this solution, 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, soak dishes for one minute in a solution of 30 ml (1 oz) of bleach mixed with 13.5 litres of lukewarm water (3 gallons). 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 30 ml (1 oz) of bleach in to 13.5 litres (3 gallons) of water at room temperature, and soak the dishes for at least one minute. Let dishes air dry.

### **Laundry**

You may continue to do laundry as normal. If you have to launder sheets heavily soiled with faeces, carefully remove as much faeces as you can and wash as normal. Use rubber gloves when handling heavily soiled sheets.

### **Wading pools**

Water that is not safe for drinking should not be used in wading pools. If you do not have a source of potable water for the wading pool; consider using an alternate recreational water supply or use an alternate recreational facility.

### **Other water treatment**

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

**For more information contact York Region *Health Connection* at 1-800-361-5653 TTY 1-866-252-9933.**

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

Revised March 1, 2010